

THE LIFE OF
JOHN PAYNE

THOMAS WRIGHT

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THE LIFE OF JOHN PAYNE

THE LIFE OF LAMARTINE

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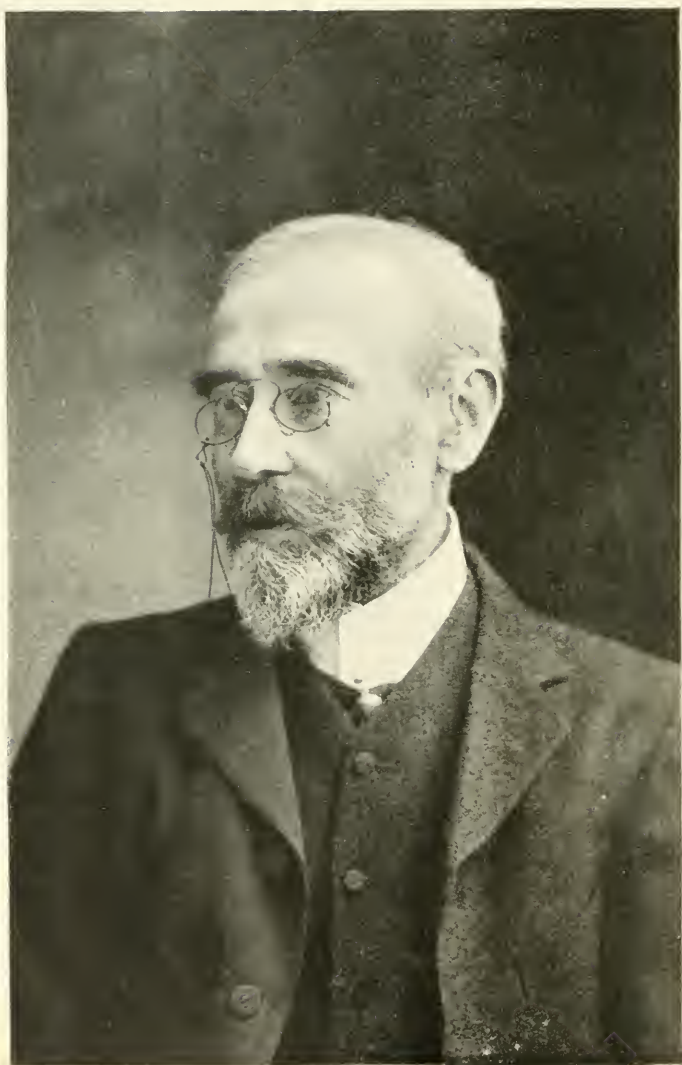
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JOHN PAYNE, 1904.

From a photograph.

[Frontispiece

THE LIFE OF JOHN PAYNE

BY

THOMAS WRIGHT

Author of "The Life of Sir Richard Burton," "The Life
of William Cowper," etc.

WITH NINETEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
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ADELPHI TERRACE

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TO F. B.
YOUNGEST AND ONLY SURVIVING
SISTER OF JOHN PAYNE
AND TO
O. M. P. AND H. M. P.,
HIS NEPHEWS AND
EXECUTORS



PREFACE

THIS work was commenced as early as 1905, and I was assisted in every possible way by Payne himself. His sisters, his executor, and Swinburne also helped me. It is founded largely on conversations with Payne (for I was careful every time I visited him to take down his Table Talk); his *Autobiography* (which is in my possession); ninety letters written by him to me; about sixty written to Mr. and Mrs. Tracy Robinson, Sir George and Lady Lewis, Mrs. Nix, and Mrs. Romeu; forty letters from Sir Richard Burton to Payne; forty-one letters that passed between Mrs. Snee and O'Shaughnessy or Payne and O'Shaughnessy, for which I am indebted to Mr. Clement Shorter and Mr. Thomas James Wise; and many letters written to Payne by Zotenberg, H. H. Furness and others. I have been helped in various ways by Mrs. Harry Payne, Mr. C. E. Lamb (Vinecent House, Kettering), Mr. Austin H. Johnson (The Squire Law Library, Cambridge), Mr. St. Clair Baddeley, Mr. Cecil Floersheim, Mr. Alfred Forman (who sent the material in Appendix No. 2), General and Mrs. Heriot and Miss Heriot, Mr. de V. Payen-Payne (who lent the letters written by Payne to Ingram), Miss Emily Hickey (West Hill House, West Hill, S.W.), Mrs. J. T. Nettleship (widow of Payne's friend), Mr. J. F. S. Jackson (1 Bellevue Terrace, Dolly Mount, Dublin), Mr. John Kettelwell, Mr. A. W. Oke, Messrs. Sotheby (34 New Bond Street), Mr. Malcolm Salaman, Mr. R. S. Garnett, Miss Ellen R. Garnett, Mr. R. H. Caunter, Mrs. Mary Dean and Miss Brereton (Payne's nurse). Messrs. Maggs (34 Conduit Street, New Bond Street) and Mr. Francis Edwards (83A High Street, Marylebone) kindly allowed me to copy many letters in their possession. Mr. Wise kindly permits me

to use various Swinburne letters. Mrs. Arnall lent me a large packet of letters written to her by her father, Mr. Snee. My wife corrected the proofs. To all who have helped me I tender most hearty thanks. It would be ungracious of me also not to mention that I am indebted to Mr. T. Fisher Unwin and Mr. W. H. Chesson for very helpful suggestions. Lastly, it is pleasant to remember that the aged Mr. William Rossetti (brother of Dante Gabriel and Christina) wrote to me only a few days before his death in order to send "all good wishes" for my book.

THOMAS WRIGHT.

OLNEY,
16 *May*, 1919

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The Life of John Payne

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD AND EARLY MANHOOD

1842-1861

JOHN PAYNE, the distinguished poet, scholar and translator of Villon, the *Arabian Nights*, Boccaccio, Omar Kheyyam, Hafiz and Heine, was born on 23 August, 1842, at 25 Great Queen Street, Bloomsbury. His ancestors had been an opulent county family settled at Rockbeare, near Exeter, their crest being a bear's paw holding a broken javelin, and a demi-Moor hung in chains. They spelt their name Paynes,¹ which became Payn and finally Payne. John Payne's father, John Edward Hawkins-Payne, a man of handsome appearance (his portrait shows him bearded and spectacled), a student, a linguist, and an inventor,² was descended from Sir John Hawkins, the famous Elizabethan admiral, and there had been for many generations a Hawkins Payne in the family. John, who had a particular detestation for conjoined names, would never use the hyphenated form. His mother was Betsy, daughter of William Rogers,³ a wealthy west-country merchant who resided in a fine old rambling house in College Place, College Green, Bristol. Mrs. Payne, small,

¹ Whence Hawkins-Payne always stamped his letters with a double P. James Payn, the novelist, was a cousin of Hawkins-Payne. Mr. de V. Payen-Payne of 49 Nevern Square is of the same family.

² He invented a shuttle which to-day is used in the looms, but others got all the profit.

³ He died in 1859.

gentle and agile, and at the same time the most dignified of her sex, was a skilful pianist, and could play a whole opera through without notes.

Directories of 1842 give under Great Queen Street the entry :

25, Payne, Mary Ann and Co., Coach-lace Manufacturers.

This Mary Ann Payne—"old Auntie Payne"—a widow, in whose house the poet was born, was his great aunt by marriage. She and her husband, who were childless, had adopted Hawkins-Payne.

From about 1846 to 1855 the home of Hawkins-Payne was in Clarendon Road, Notting Hill, and his family finally consisted of three sons and three daughters, namely John, the subject of this work, Annie, William, Nora, Frances and Harry.¹

At an early age John was sent to a school kept by Mr. Ebenezer J. Pearee, 5 Pembridge Villas,² Pembridge Gardens, Westbourne Park, where his principal companion was Charles Leigh Lewes, son of George Henry Lewes, friend of George Eliot.³ Another companion of his childhood was Mackay (who was to become General) Heriot,⁴ "Mac," as he was called. He and Payne fell in love with a Miss Adlebert, the twelve-year-old daughter of a coach-builder, and sad to say "fought over her," but before their school-days were passed the young lady went out of the life of both combatants. When only ten years old, Payne translated into English verse some of Horace's odes, and at twelve he wrote a poem, in the style of Macaulay's *Lays*, on Caesar's conquest of Britain.

In the meantime the circumstances of his father, owing to heavy losses in business (for which he had no aptitude), had become seriously straitened, and in 1855

¹ William died 23 November, 1910; Harry (H. R.) 12 November, 1916; Annie (Mrs. Pritchard), 1 April, 1917; and Nora, 16 September, 1917. Frances (Mrs. Byam) still survives.

² Two houses thrown into one.

³ From 1854 till Lewes's death in 1878. She died in 1880.

⁴ Son of Major Mackay Heriot, Royal Marines, who married as second wife Joanna Wood, daughter of Evelyn Wood, first cousin of Payne's father. He died in November 1918.



JOHN EDWARD HAWKINS-PAYNE, JOHN PAYNE'S FATHER.

To face p. 10.



the boy was removed from school and obliged to enter at once on the struggle for a livelihood. Being of a shy and nervous nature, Payne detested the new life, and in after years, when recalling it, he was apt to judge his father harshly. Indeed he was bitter against him as late as 1902 when he wrote his *Autobiography*¹—the *Memoranda*—the manuscript of which is in my possession. In that work Payne says²: “The result of this harsh and ill-considered treatment by my father (completely unsuccessful, I need hardly say, so far as regarded its prime object, the crushing out the germ of literature in me) was to inoculate me with what Senancour calls *l’habitude rêveuse d’une âme comprimée*, to deprive me of all self-confidence and to send me out into the world a mere mass of naked nerve, to fight a solitary battle at a frightful disadvantage.”

The elder Payne, however, despite his errors of judgment was really a man of a most kind and affectionate disposition, and he always endeavoured to do the best possible for his family.

When Payne was thirteen Hawkins-Payne removed from London to Redcliffe Parade, Bristol, in order to undertake the charge of a manufacturing dry-saltery business, which had been bought for him by Mr. Rogers. John, who was interested in chemicals, spent many hours in the warehouse, and he preserved delightful memories of his grandfather’s old rambling house on College Green, of Brandon Hill and the ancient and storied city huddled round it. Payne loved Bristol, and the romantic surroundings had over him much the same influence that Stoke Newington—especially the picturesque thoroughfare of Church Street—had over the youthful Edgar Allan Poe.³ It is to the fascination of Bristol and to the stories of its old buccaneers and merchants and their adventures on the cruel tumbling sea that we owe a number of the ballads that are among the best products of his genius.

Within five years after leaving school Payne passed through the various experiences of clerk to an auctioneer,

¹ Part of the first page of which we reproduce.

² Page 23.

³ Payne was influenced by Poe. See pp: 29, 59 and 183.

to a coach-builder and to an architect, assistant in the office of a Bristol newspaper, and usher first in his old school in Pembridge Gardens and subsequently in another school. His most distasteful experiences of all were those at the schools, the horrors of which, he said, would have furnished a new circle in Dante's hell.¹ His heart, indeed, was never either at the desk or the blackboard, but with his beloved books.

He had already developed a passion for languages ; the masterpieces in the various literatures held him spell-bound, and he longed to render them into noble and beautiful English. The poet, too, was already revealed. Between the ages of fourteen and nineteen he made metrical translations of the whole of Dante, Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea*, the second part of *Faust*, Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, Calderon's *Magico Prodigioso*, and a great number of shorter poems from a dozen or more languages, including German, old and modern French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Greek and Latin, all which languages, with the exception of French, Latin and Greek (learnt at school) were acquired by private study.

While the Paynes were living at Bristol, or rather at Redland Park, Clifton, which was their home after the death (in 1859) of Mr. Rogers, Hawkins-Payne paid a visit to Rockbeare and was shown the communion plate that had been presented to the church by one of his ancestors, hidden in Cromwell's days, and dug up when the edifice was restored in modern times. On the back of the platter was the family coat-of-arms. To his daughter Frances he said : "We owned all that land and were of consequence in those days before the bad times came."

When the volunteer movement was in its infancy Payne, whose patriotism was always conspicuous, enrolled himself at Bristol. Had he been satisfied with his uniform, accoutrements and arms, and with drilling on Durdham Downs all would have been well ; but it is on record that the charwoman who assisted the family, having on some occasion offended him, he straightway, his martial

¹ *Autobiography*, p. 23.



MRS. HAWKINS-PAYNE, JOHN PAYNE'S MOTHER.

[To face p. 12.

spirit being suddenly aroused, chased the wretched woman about the house with his rifle until she at last took refuge in the cellar. This, I believe, was the only military engagement in which Payne ever took part. The enemy, as is usual in modern warfare, would not admit defeat. She had merely retired for strategic reasons.

CHAPTER II

IN A SOLICITOR'S OFFICE

1862-1866

IN 1861, at the age of nineteen, Payne was permitted to settle down in a London solicitor's office, the atmosphere of which he describes as "rather less uncongenial" than that of his previous callings. Up to this time he had written but little original verse, and "curiously enough," to use Payne's phrase, the effectual awakening in him of the poetical faculty was due to a man whom he valued only as a prose writer, R. W. Emerson. "In 1862," says Payne, "when in my twentieth year I came across a tiny English edition of his first twelve *Essays*¹ and became at once possessed by them." He learnt them well-nigh by heart, and carried them about amulet fashion; and in after years he used to insist that nothing of Emerson's beyond these twelve essays would live. Keats and Shelley, both of whom he loved, had at that time little influence over him; Spenser he worshipped, and he drank deep of Landor² and Wordsworth. Of contemporaries he was familiar only with Browning³ as represented by *Men and Women*, *Paracelsus*, *Christmas Eve*, *Easter Day* and the Plays. Late in life he said to me, "Browning was the delight of my boyhood, and I still treasure and love the two little volumes of the original edition (1855) of *Men and Women*,⁴ which, to my taste, contains all his worthiness."

¹ Published 1841.

² He revelled in Landor's *Hellenics*. For Payne's poem on Landor "The Dead Master," see *Collected Poems*, ii. 243.

³ Browning was born in 1812.

⁴ *Everyman's Library*, vol. ii. pp. 276-509.



OLD AUNTY PAYNE, 1874.

From a photograph.

[To face p. 14.

By this time the elder Payne had returned from Bristol to London, his new home being Ardwick House, Boundary Road, St. John's Wood. John resided at 37 Upper Marylebone Street, where he shared rooms with Mr. (afterwards Dr.) E. J. Nix, who was *locum tenens* to Dr. Brown, a West End practitioner. Mr. Nix was all brightness and hope, but of imagination he possessed not one atom. In Payne an uncontrollable imagination and a fondness for fun not infrequently went hand in hand with gloom and foreboding. Had the two young men been French, we could have said, and meant it literally, "Optimism and Pessimism have kissed each other." The room occupied by the young men was provided with green venetian blinds. On the opposite side of the road was a butcher's shop, and the two friends as they worked could hear the butcher pacing up and down in front of his shop, and crying "Buy! Buy! Buy!" The pleasant thought then occurred to them to purchase tin pea-shooters, and they often amused themselves by firing parched peas at the passers-by on the opposite side of the road. The people who were struck, imagining that it was the butcher, assailed him with loud and angry speech while the young men behind the blinds watched the proceedings with roars of laughter.

We said that Payne was imaginative. Some would call him superstitious.¹ He believed in table turning and declared (whether in fun or earnest) that he once saw a table dance downstairs.

He was very shortsighted, and as the result of this defect many amusing incidents occurred. Once when he and Mr. Nix were at tea with Mrs. Brown, he set the silver teapot on the footman, but too near the fire, with the result that the solder between the spout and the pot became melted. To his dismay when he picked up the teapot there was no spout. "Oh, lor! Nix," he said, "where's the spout!" Nix, after looking into the pot and finding it almost empty said, "Oh, lor! Payne, where's the tea!" Payne's love for chemical experiments, fruit of his experiences at Bristol, was also attended with

¹ See also his sonnet "Superstition," *Vigil and Vision*, p. 102.

inconveniences. He often burnt himself, his friends, and the furniture, and once he set the house on fire. Altogether he was a most entertaining person to live with.

While at 37 Upper Marylebone Street Payne renewed his acquaintance with his old schoolfellow and friend, Charles Leigh Lewes. The young men on comparing notes discovered that each was a music enthusiast. Payne, indeed, had inherited from his mother the gift of playing by sight, and the friends had other tastes in common. As a guest at the Priory, North Row, St. John's Wood, Payne was often in the company of George Henry Lewes and George Eliot. He used to describe Lewes (called by Carlyle "Ape Lewes") as "a pock-pitted mannikin with little greasy corkscrew curls," and George Eliot as "the ugliest and most untidy woman he ever knew," her stockings for one thing, to quote Mrs. Byam, "being always down at heel."¹ He once said to me, "She had a face like the bowl of a spoon," adding that "the most attractive inmate of the house was a bull-dog, which by the side of Lewes and George Eliot appeared quite handsome." But if Lewes was not an Apollo he possessed, in addition to intellect, both brightness and versatility. A hedonist, a sensualist, yet wherever he went he carried intellectual sunshine. His brightness and expansiveness found or made pleasure everywhere. Through Charles Leigh Lewes, Payne became acquainted with Buxton Forman, the Keats and Shelley enthusiast, and other students of musical tastes.

The elder Payne had by this time (but through what agency is not clear)² become prosperous again, and he once more lived in good style.

John often visited the nursery where he amused the little ones—to say nothing of "Mrs. Broad"³ the nurse—by playing his violin.⁴ His mother would sometimes

¹ That is they had dropped to her heels.

² Probably owing to a legacy from Mr. Rogers, who died as already stated in 1859.

³ Ann Broadway, "Mrs. Broad" as they called her, who is still living at Weston-super-Mare.

⁴ "He played beautifully," said his sister Frances (Mrs. Byam). Later we used to sit up half the night to hear him.

accompany him with the piano or the harp, and Annie used to sing. He was also fond of making toys, at which he was an adept, melting lead, and lighting the room with magnesian wire. The children always sat on his knee to take their medicine. From boyhood he had been a lover of cats,¹ and he could never hear anything against them. The family cat, Sambo, at Ardwick House, a most ugly and disreputable black manx, fought every other cat and every dog in the neighbourhood, and used to return after a night's devilry with torn fur and bleeding ears. John invariably took its part, and, being unable to praise its outward appearance, called it "a beautiful inside cat."

Cats, indeed, took to him instinctively. Once when he and his sister Frances were walking together at Ilfracombe they happened to come to some steps on which a cat was seated licking its paws, and Payne stooped to stroke it. When they passed on they were followed, to their very great surprise, not only by this cat, but also by all the other cats within sight. It was the Pied Piper of Hamelin, with a difference in the animal. Payne was also very fond of young donkeys,² admiring particularly those which he saw on the Devonshire moors, near Tavistock. He could not sufficiently praise their chinchilla-like fur and their "little innocent sweet faces," and he said they resembled Persian kittens. But donkeys anywhere seemed to know instinctively that he was their friend, and when he came in sight they would put their muzzles over gates and fences to be stroked. Many of his poems are in praise of the cat and the donkey.

Life through he was an ardent Londoner, and he was never happier than when wandering about the old parts of the city.

It seems to have been in 1866 that the Payne family became acquainted with Miss Rose Fisher, a Devonshire young lady, daughter of Dr. Thomas Fisher, friend of Charles Dickens. Miss Fisher had been sent to a boarding-

¹ In *Flower o' the Thorn*, p. 6, the cat is praised at the expense of "the duller dog."

² See also his poem "The Ass," *Carol and Cadence*, p. 70.

school in London and the Paynes, as friends of the family, were asked to allow her to visit them and to take her out. Payne, his mother and sisters and Miss Rose Fisher, once went to a Handel festival at the Crystal Palace, where one of the attractions was a reproduction of Shakespeare's house. For some reason Payne was just then incensed against Shakespeare, and the demon of mischief having taken possession of him, he set himself the task of turning all the pictures in the house to the wall, and Miss Fisher wickedly got on chairs and helped him. Poor Mrs. Payne told them they ought to know better, worked herself into a fever, and implored them to desist, but in vain; and the good soul all but fainted when an official entered and, after gazing in blank amazement at the sight, endeavoured to find out who were the culprits.

Rose was so often in and out of Ardwick House that she and Annie Payne were taken for sisters, and Mrs. Payne used to speak of her as "my outside daughter."

To Miss Fisher,¹ who at the time was spending her holiday in Devonshire, Payne, on 20 December, 1866, wrote: "I wish you were coming up at Christmas. I would take you to hear midnight mass at the great Catholic cathedral in Moorfields, and we would have such fun. You have no idea what an exquisite sight the church is with its oceans of flowers and thousands of great wax candles, and then Mozart's glorious Twelfth Mass as well. It is the most satisfactory way of spending Christmas Eve that I know of. I took Annie once, and she was specially delighted with the priests' superb lace dresses and at being up till three o'clock in the morning. The yearly coming of Christmas always possesses me with a curiously mingled feeling of gladness and melancholy. I never had much of the social pleasures usually connected with the season, and therefore they have little or nothing to do with it in my mind. The delight I experience in it is entirely from within. As it comes near I always feel wrapped in a state of enchantment in which all the business of the world seems unreal and useless. It is connected to

¹ The Letters to Miss Fisher (Mrs. Heriot) cover from 1866 to 1876. During that period Payne gave her six books of his poems in manuscript.

me with so many exquisite thoughts and legends that I am sure no Christian (in the conventional sense of the term, absurd as it is, as if every lover of beauty and goodness were not a follower of Christ, be his religion what it may) can regard the season with more love and veneration than I do, and I am still more certain that very few have exactly the same exquisite unreal delight in its association as I have. As 'the time draws near the birth of Christ' I find myself lying awake at night in a state of dreamy ecstatic peacefulness, and the most lovely and fantastic dream-pictures flash across my brain. Every thought and idea seems transmuted into some golden wonder, and my fancy wanders effortless over the hills and dales, the glades and meadows of an ethereal fairyland. Only one poet (but I am happy to say that one is the greatest God has blessed us with) seems to me to share exactly my love of Christmas. Shakespeare, in his *Hamlet* and one or two other plays, throws out little suggestive bits of priceless verse that embody to me the very essence and ideal of Christmas. I know of nothing so delicately pure and suggestive in relation to my beloved season as those fragmentary touches of his. That little bit in the beginning of *Hamlet*: 'Some say that ever gainst that season comes So hallowed and so gracious is the time' seems to me unsurpassedly lovely. I wonder whether it strikes you in the same way. Whenever I think of it or read it I feel a thrill of strange pleasure as if no mortal man spoke (but then you know I am a strange fantastic animal, and you must not take all I say as gospel). I think, however, Shakespeare must have meant to refer only to the evil spirits as being condemned to quiescence during the Christmas Eve, for to me it appears as if the world would be more full of good spirits and fairies now than at any other time in the long year. I don't suppose many people think as I do about Christmas, but as I said before, you are the only one who I think would ever understand the peculiar sanctity and beauty it has for me, much less join in it.

"Old Auntie Payne is going to the Pantomime. Fancy the dear old girl—age seventy-nine—with Harry beside

her, beaming upon clown and pantaloons. I shall go, if merely to see the delight of these two children."

In 1867, after serving his "five years' articles," Payne was "admitted a solicitor."¹

¹ *Autobiography*, p. 23.

CHAPTER III

THE MASQUE OF SHADOWS

1867-1870

By 1866 Payne had formed friendships with two very remarkable young men—John Trivett Nettleship and Arthur O'Shaughnessy. The three friends, who became inseparable, were denominated "The Triumvirate." Nettleship, born in 1841, and therefore about twenty-five, was large of stature and of sturdy build, with a thick crop of hair. Artist and mystic, he may be set down as a compound of the *grand seigneur*, Rabelais and Blake. It was the influence of Blake that led him to make, among similar productions, a painting of God with eyes turned inward upon His own glory. He was by turns tender, fiery, overbearing, violently aggressive, apathetic, and tender again. He could wound. With all his endeavours, success seemed unattainable. Large in stature, he had the big man's weaknesses. Unlike Giant Despair, he clubbed not his foes but his best friends. His victims, however, continued to love him—in a way.

O'Shaughnessy, dreamer and poet, was a slight, frail, very erect Dresden-china looking figure (a thread-paper of a man, Payne called him), with small hands and feet. He was supposed to be a natural son of Lord Lytton the novelist; he was certainly an assistant in the Zoological Department of the British Museum, and few more delightful instances could be given of the square man in the round hole. Whatever he loved, was with "a supreme soul-filling" passion. Yet he understood the value of circumspection, for he says in a letter of 22 May, 1870 :

"Oh, how bitter and appalling is the thought that, for some little imperfection . . . for the weakness of a will, the blindness of a doubt . . . one may lose for ever, perhaps, the fairest and most precious good that might have been ours." He was chivalrous as Bayard. He irritated his friends by writing in violet ink.

If Nettleship fell upon his friends with clubs, O'Shaughnessy treated his with neglect, allowing them to drift away. Yet, if they showed any inclination to return, he would run more than halfway to meet them. He spent his days among beetles stuck on pins and things in bottles, and his nights with the poets, among whom it was his ambition to be numbered.

To the colour Nettleship took from Rabelais allusion has already been made, but all three men were votaries of this writer. O'Shaughnessy frequently quoted him, usually in French; Payne, as will be seen, wrote not only poems,¹ but also an essay on him.

By and by others were added to this little literary circle, and an essay club was formed, which met at the Fetherstone Hotel in Southampton Row, whence its name the Fetherstone Club. The members were: Payne, Nettleship, O'Shaughnessy, E. B. Baxter (who became a doctor), (Sir) H. S. Cotton, (Sir) Edmund W. Bryne (who became a judge), and (Sir) C. J. Lyall. On the programmes were the mysterious letters P.B.Y.O.B., which, however, meant nothing more alarming than, "Please bring your own bloater." Nettleship read an essay on Browning,² O'Shaughnessy on Criticism, Payne on Rabelais, and Lyall on Hafiz. Payne used to say that the seven men who were comprised in this little society were all of different nationalities. At that time Wagner was unknown in England, and Payne arranged some of that musician's operas for the cosmopolitan septette.³ Indeed, it was largely owing to his efforts that Wagner eventually obtained vogue in this country.

¹ E.g. "Rabelais," in *Vigil and Vision*, p. 59.

² Published in 1868. British Museum Press Mark 11824 b40.

³ See also *Songs of Life and Death*, Introductory poem, and the Wagner sonnets in *Vigil and Vision*.



JOHN TRIVETT NETTLESHIP.

From a photograph by Elliott & Fry.

[To face p. 22.]

Payne, O'Shaughnessy, and Nettleship were frequent guests at Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Richard Garnett's, St. Edmund's Terrace, near Primrose Hill, and also at Dr. Westland Marston's¹ hard by, and were included in any party given at either house. The good-humoured charge was sometimes made against the three friends of forming a mutual admiration society. Among Payne's compliments to O'Shaughnessy was a sonnet,¹ with a copy of the *Divina Commedia*.² Nettleship, in an undated letter, wrote: "My dear Arthur,—Those lines of your Barcarole haunt me. I awoke this morning and the whisper of them was on my ear. The effect was as of a splendid jewelled snake, with cruel eyes, with no heart—

"... for such a dream as love is lost before the morning."

I shall make a picture of the lines.—Ever your loving, Jack."

It was alleged of Nettleship, who, in spite of his thick crop of hair, was tormented by a dread of premature baldness, that he might any morning at an early hour be seen walking rapidly round Regent's Park without his hat and boots. Payne and O'Shaughnessy read their poems to each other, and like other brilliant young men of the period they indulged in long hair, while Payne gloried in a series of ties in pale colours—pale lemon, pale blue, and pale cerise being his favourites; and all three admitted an admiration for Charles Wells's dramatic poem, *Joseph and his Brethren*.³

Payne used to say that his first literary encouragement was from Anthony Trollope, who accepted for *St. Paul's Magazine* a number of his poems. The following is the list:—

"A City Apologue," December 1867 (*Collected Poems*, ii. 3).

"Columbus," May 1868 (not republished).

¹ Mrs. Garnett's mother and Mrs. Marston were sisters. Dr. Marston's son was the blind poet, Philip Bourke Marston.

² *Collected Poems*, ii. p. 173.

See the edition of this work in *The World's Classics*, p. xx.

"The Red Rose," October 1868 (*Collected Poems*, ii. 38).

"*Quia Multum Amavit*," December 1868 (*Collected Poems*, ii. 17).

"The Search after the Fountain of Jouvence,"¹ March-June 1869 (*Collected Poems*, i. 215).

His poem "A Dream Life" appeared in *Temple Bar*, March 1868 (*Col. Poems*, ii. 35). Other of his productions appeared in the *St. James's Magazine*, to No. 40 of which periodical he also contributed a review of Blackie's translation of Faust.

In these poems we see, as it were, two John Paynes—first the poet of London, and secondly the Romancer. The most noticeable feature in the "London City Poems," as they were afterwards called, is pathos. Payne is pre-eminently the poet of London. All his work was done in the great city, and much of that work is influenced by its movement and roar. No poet before him had sung so enthusiastically and so continuously the London which he so dearly loved, and upon which he threw the glamour of his genius. He found London a mere huddle of bricks and mortar, he left it a city of enchantment. We may say of him as he himself said of Summer :

Was ever miracle like thine,
That solvest us of care and pine,
And even to London's steppes of stone
A glory grantest of thine own ?²

He may, indeed, be styled London's only poet—in the sense that almost everything he wrote in the way of original verse (with the exception, of course, of his ballads) concerns the city of his birth.

Of the second Payne, the romancer, whose verses ring "with the golden choirings of the birds"³ we shall speak in subsequent chapters.

The origin of the poem "*Quia Multum Amavit*" was as follows :—

One day in November 1868 Payne took his little sister

¹ Appears in *Collected Poems* as "The Fountain of Youth."

² *Carol and Cadence*, p. 103.

³ "Fountain of Youth," *Collected Poems*, vol. i.



JOHN PAYNE AS A YOUNG MAN.

From a photograph by W. G. Lewis, Bath.

[To face p. 24.]

Annie for a walk, and on their way they came upon some men who were dragging the Regent's Canal. The surroundings were dank, gray, and gloomy. The water was dark and sullen, and presently the body of a woman with the water dripping from her hair and clothes was hauled to the bank. The scene was one which neither the poet nor his sister ever forgot, and "*Quia Multum Amavit*"¹ was one of the immediate results.

By 1868 Payne had become acquainted with Ford Madox Brown² (whose son Oliver,³ though only eleven, had also displayed evidences of genius, both as author and artist), Burne Jones, William Bell Scott the painter-poet, Theodore Watts, who afterwards assumed the name of Watts-Dunton, and Simeon Solomon, who then resided at 12 Fitzroy Street, W.

Ford Madox Brown's house, 37 Fitzroy Square,⁴ was big enough for a castle. "It had wide lofty rooms, massive stone staircases, and long underground passages leading to vaults that might have served for dungeons—a house haunted by echoes and with winds whispering secrets in its great chambers. Fires roared up the wide-mouthed chimneys."⁵ Here Payne and O'Shaughnessy met not only Madox Brown, who with his long beard and pleasing carriage recalled the Florentine masters of old time, but also Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, Joaquin Miller, the American poet, who used to arrive at these gatherings in a bright cowboy shirt, wide-awake, and mud-bespattered riding boots, Christina Rossetti, Miss Mathilde Blind, the translator, and Mrs. William Morris, whose beauty her husband sang and Rossetti painted. Mrs. Morris was "divinely tall," but no less remarkable than her height were her

¹ *Collected Poems*, ii. 17, where the woman is represented as having been "found drowned below Waterloo Bridge." Her name is given as Eliza Farrell.

² Ford Madox Brown was twice married. He married in 1840 Elizabeth Bromley, and in 1848 Emma Hill, a girl of fifteen. He had three children—Lucy (*m.* William Rossetti), Catherine (*m.* Dr. Hueffer), and Oliver.

³ He died 5 November, 1874. See Payne's *Collected Poems*, ii. 308, and the *Biography* of O. M. Brown, by J. H. Ingram, 1883.

⁴ The historic house where Thackeray lodged Colonel Newcombe.

⁵ *Arthur O'Shaughnessy*, by Louise Chandler Moulton, 1894.

equally remarkable grace, her heavy dark hair, her full sensitive red lips,

. her proud dark eyes
And her petulant quick replies.

There also entered about this time into the life of Nettleship, O'Shaughnessy, and Payne the lovely and pathetic figure of Helen Snee—the lady who inspired Payne's muse as Beatrice had inspired Dante's and Laura, Petrarch's. There was this difference—whereas Dante woke to perfect song during the lifetime of Beatrice, and Petrarch during the lifetime of Laura—it was not until twenty-five years after Helen Snee's death that Payne (though previously she had inspired his pen¹) issued his beautiful *Carol and Cadence*, in which her loveliness, her personal charm, her intellectual gifts, and her pathetic fate are sung in deathless numbers. Payne himself recognized the remarkable resemblance between his worship of the idealized Helen and Dante's worship of the idealized Beatrice.

Helen Matthews, for that was her maiden name, was born in London on 15 June, 1845.² At an early age she married a Mr. Noble, who took her to Spain. He died abroad, and on 25 September, 1866, at the age of twenty-two, she was married in St. Paul's Church, in the parish of St. Pancras, to Mr. Frederick Snee, a traveller for Messrs. Bass, the brewers of Stoke-on-Trent. They resided in Camden Town, and apparently at the house, 42 St. Augustine's Road, from which Mrs. Noble was married. Mr. Snee, a tiny, bearded, extremely methodical, genuinely religious, and remarkably affectionate man, was greatly attached to his wife, but his business often kept him from home. In religion he was a Protestant, and apparently a member of the Church of England. Mrs. Snee was nominally a Roman Catholic.

¹ Some of the poems in *Songs of Life and Death* and in *New Poems* seem to have been inspired by her.

² According to her gravestone in Kensal Green Cemetery (Roman Catholic). This would make her 34 years 10 months at date of her death. According to her death certificate she was 35 at that date. If the latter is correct she must have been born 15 June, 1844.

He spoke French fluently, and his duties sometimes carried him to Paris, where in the latter part of his life he resided, and he travelled in most of the western countries of Europe. He had some knowledge of German and Latin, and subsequently taught himself Greek. He was a lover of English literature, and especially of the works (both in poetry and prose) of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whom he often quoted, and a fair musician, but he evidently sang indifferently, for we are told that he used to load the piano with popular songs which he sang "perfectly out of tune." He was an enthusiastic philatelist, and had a fine collection of postage stamps. He had a vein of humour, he loved conundrums, and was never happier than when asking or guessing them.

Mrs. Snee was also small and slight in stature. Her amber hair fell "in clustering curls," and she had "a passionate sensitive face" and bright gray eyes. By the witchery of her manner she fascinated—hypnotized—all who came into her company. She was all melody and poetry, and beauty and grace. Payne likened her to a lovely butterfly. She delighted in the conversation of men of genius, and she had herself remarkable literary gifts. Those of her letters that have been preserved¹ are the revelation of a highly strung and an abnormally sensitive and impassioned soul. They are studded with striking passages. Like her husband, she spoke French fluently, and was an ardent admirer of the works of Gautier (her "dear Théophile") and Balzac, to which authors she was recommended by O'Shaughnessy. She says: "I am delighted at your selection of Gautier's charming stories. I don't believe there is anyone who would love them so much. How delicious is *L'oreiller d'une Jeune Fille* and *Laquelle de Dent*." Of "Sylvain," the eighth stripe in *La Peau de Tigre*, she says "a more delicious fancy never dawned on poet's imagination." "May I be pardoned," she cries penitently, after reading *Eugénie Grandet*, "for having ever spoken disrespectfully of Balzac!"

¹ The originals are now in the possession of Mr. Thomas James Wise. Most are on white paper, one is on buff, a few are on black-edged white paper, and some have her husband's monogram F and S entangled. The early letters were written with a fine pen, the later with a thick one.

Swinburne's poems¹ were constantly at her elbow. "The spirit of Poesy," she said, "kept suggesting the most glorious things to her." She could scarcely tear herself away from her books. "I read till I am stupid," she says, "and still I read." She revelled in life. At one time she was ambitious to go on the stage. "I have always some new delight," she once exclaimed. Want of courage was her weakness. "There is nothing to be done with certain troubles," she said, "except to walk away from them." She put literature and art above all other pursuits, whence her dictum that "Poets should have no family ties." "My life," she once said, "is made of wild fits of delight and pain."²

Thanks to her letters we see her "gliding" (the expression is her own) in the streets of Camden Town "like a pale ghost in white muslin," or seated in the twilight reading "tenderly" to herself Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*, which she knew nearly by heart, or losing herself in one of "Gautier's charming stories," which makes her cry heartily. She describes her soul as full of delicious sadness, and opening "to the dying summer like a rose."³

She had three cats, "Tim," a sphinx; a white one (the gift of O'Shaughnessy), an amiable sleepy ball of thistle down; and a black one, "a lithe and agile familiar," she says, "who caresses me with violence and keeps her fiery eyes fixed on mine. What passion there is in those sombre jewels!" She goes fishing to please her husband, and between them they catch "twenty-seven little bits," but her "heart ached for the poor things."

Her life was sometimes "too bitter to be borne." She felt that she could "spill it like water." She had a presentiment that she would die young. Sometimes she was so ill that she could scarcely bear her hair to be dressed, or her pretty new dress put on. There were times when she wished to turn her "pale little tired face to the wall and die."

How Netteship, O'Shaughnessy, and Payne became acquainted with the Snees is not revealed—it may have

¹ *Poems and Ballads*, 1st Series.

² Letter, 19 June, 1871.

³ 27 July, 1870.

been at one of the concerts at Queen's Hall—but they were on terms of friendship early in 1869. The spell of Mrs. Snee is seen in the products of Nettleship's pencil, and, as we shall see, most of the poetry in O'Shaughnessy's first volume owes its value almost entirely to her magnetic personality. Possibly Mrs. Snee was a guest at Madox Brown's castle. If so, she must have met there her rival in the estimation of literary men and artists—Mrs. William Morris—though there could not have been a greater contrast than between the tall, dusky presence of Mrs. Morris and the petite, fragile, golden-haired “Helen.” Out of this frail-looking, poetical, ethereal woman Payne fabricated a goddess, such as neither earth nor Olympus ever saw, but, as we have already observed, it was not until twenty-five years after her death that the majority of his impassioned poems in praise of her were written. We have likened Payne's attitude to Mrs. Snee to that of Rossetti towards Mrs. William Morris, whose face appears so frequently on his canvases; but a closer parallel is that offered by Edgar Allan Poe¹ and the lady or ladies whom, after their death, he immortalized as Helen, Ulalume, and Annabel Lee. Mrs. Snee's own attitude towards Payne, as revealed in her published letters, is merely that of respect for a scholar and man of genius, and he is always referred to distantly as “Mr. Payne.”

Early in 1870 O'Shaughnessy decided to issue his poems in book form, and he consulted his friends on the subject of a title for the volume. Payne suggested “something in German.” Mrs. Snee enquired (2 February, 1870): “Do you think *Etherea* would be a pretty name for the book? Or perhaps Mr. Payne could find some little-known Greek word signifying brain-born, or some Greek equivalent for the German title he proposed. It would be so much prettier all in one word.”

Eventually O'Shaughnessy decided on the title *An Epic of Women*, and his book was published² by Hotten

¹ Payne and Ingram, the biographer of Poe, became, as will be seen, intimate friends.

² Five hundred copies were printed and O'Shaughnessy paid £35 on account, 420 were sold by 21 February, 1873, when the bill amounted

on 18 April, 1870. The illustrations, which were fantastic and Blake-like, were from the pencil of Nettleship, and the volume was dedicated to Payne. Almost every page is lighted up with Mrs. Snee's "heavy golden locks"—"the wonder of her hair." Of her, too, O'Shaughnessy was thinking when he wrote in "Palm Flowers":

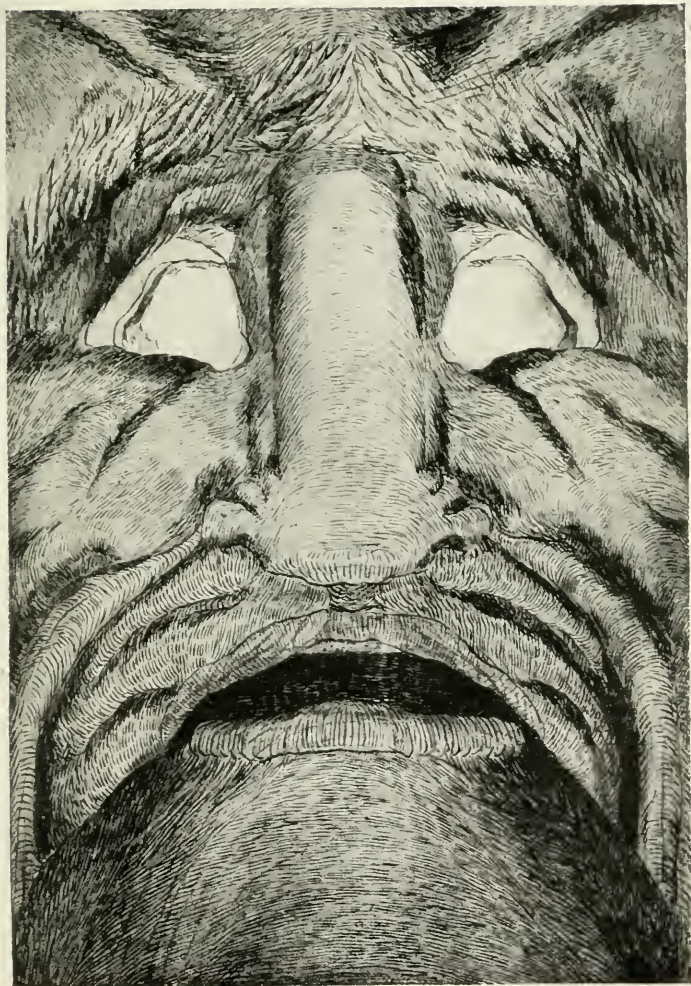
All the perfumes and perfections
Of that clime have met with grace
In her body, and complexions
Of its flowers are on her face.

As it was her loveliness and intellect that first prompted him to write, so she herself is the sole burden of his song.

Other houses at which the Triumvirate were welcome were Sir Thomas and Lady Duffus Hardy's, Portsdown Road, Maida Vale; J. C. Robinson's, Gore Street; William Rossetti's, Endsleigh Gardens; and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's, 16 Cheyne Walk. At D. G. Rossetti's they met Christina Rossetti, Edward John Trelawny, R. H. Horne, and Theodore Watts (Watts-Dunton), to say nothing of the racoon, which swallowed and apparently enjoyed "a shillingsworth of prussic acid," the armadillo, the zebu, the wombat, and other uncanny beasts that happened for the moment to be ranging this lively establishment. The wombat which devoured the contents of a valuable box of cigars, and which had a friendly habit of nestling against visitors and nibbling their legs, died young, and Rossetti was the recipient of quite a number of condolences, all of them more or less insincere. The conversations often took place in the Green Dining-room, among the languorous beauties on Rossetti's canvases. Of the talkers Payne was most attracted by E. J. Trelawny,¹ then a striking old man with a white beard. This, together with his hawk nose and deeply-recessed eyes, and his fine figure, made him look like a viking. He always went stockingless, and he loved of a morning to bathe in ice-cold water. He had been the friend of

to £101 12s. 5d. The 420 copies sold at 3s. 6d., less certain charges, came to £73 10s. The balance due to the publisher was therefore £28 2s. 5d.

¹ Ho died 13 August, 1881.



GOD WITH EYES TURNED INWARD UPON HIS OWN GLORY.

From a drawing by J. T. Nettleship, showing the influence of William Blake.

(Lent by Mrs. J. T. Nettleship.)

Byron and Shelley, of whom he told extraordinary tales. As he spoke, the ghosts of the two poets and of Mary Shelley¹ and Claire Clairmont seemed to glide about one. He had also known Peacock, whom he hated, and Godwin, whom he underrated. He used to say that a man with an iron will could force his way anywhere. He had an iron will, but there was nowhere in particular that he wanted to go. But if he made no name in literature (though he could write the most virile English), he was a more magnetic figure than most of the great ones with whom he mingled. Everybody wanted to meet the vigorous old Spartan. Between Payne and Shelley there was much in common, and Payne was glad through the medium of Trelawny to come close to a poet whose music he admired, and with whose attitude towards life he sympathized.

Mr. St. Clair Baddeley, who met Payne at William Rossetti's, says²: "I was struck by his foreign appearance and electric ardour and power of expression, which seemed almost to give shocks to the subdued vivacity of that literary abode. I had lately been in France and Italy, so it seemed refreshing to me, but still it gave me no rest. Madox Brown was there, and didn't get a word in edgewise. Trelawny called Payne a mosquito."

That Payne—the shyest of men—should, when in company, and when he forgot himself, easily, by his ardour, dominate any gathering in which he took part will seem surprising to those who did not know him personally. Many instances, however, similar to the one recorded by Mr. Baddeley could be advanced.

In the meantime Payne had prepared for the press the volume of Sonnets which was subsequently published with the title of *Intaglios*. They were written mainly in 1868 and 1869, and the MS. was in the publisher's hands³ at the end of the latter year. There were, however,

¹ She died in 1851.

² Letter of Mr. Baddeley to me, 8 September, 1918. By the same post, curiously, I heard from William Rossetti, who was then "close upon eighty-nine and very infirm both in hearing and eyesight and otherwise."

³ Basil Montagu Pickering, 196 Piccadilly.

long delays, and when on 19 July, 1870, war broke out between France and Germany the book was stopped.¹ Curious to say not only was Payne's first volume of poems stopped by a war between France and Germany, but his last volume also, as will be seen, was stopped by the outbreak of war between the same two countries—the Great War which ultimately involved most of the world.

In the meantime Payne had sent to the press another volume of poems, to which he had given the title of *The Masque of Shadows*,² which he dedicated to O'Shaughnessy. It appeared in September 1870, and it contained four poems: "The Masque of Shadows," "The Rime of Redemption," "The Building of the Dream," and "The Romance of Sir Floris." The opening poem is the story of the wanderings of a "gray ghost"—a shadow among shadowy temples, vistas

Of colonnades and peristyles,
Prolonged and joined for endless miles,

shadowy trees and shadowy flowers in a land where a shadow sun rises from shadow depths. Watts-Dunton once said to me: "If you want to know whether a man is a true poet, ask yourself whether he sees things just as they are, or whether he looks at things through a poetic gauze.³ Mr. Payne answers to the test, and he is therefore a true poet."

"The Rime of Redemption," which is by turns a seething sea of poetry and a rushing mighty whirlwind, places Payne in the very first rank of ballad writers. It is the most terrific fantasy in the language.

On its first perusal the reader, while thrilled to the marrow—stirred to the bottom of his soul—may ask whether feelings so high-wrought ought to have been permitted expression. There they are, however, poured

¹ Payne told me this at my second interview with him, 19 October, 1904.

² Publisher, Basil Montagu Pickering, 196 Piccadilly.

³ Wagner quotes Schiller as saying of "Something," "that it alone is true because it never was." Letter to Mathilde Wesendonck, pp. 96, 97.

out hissing hot, and still hissing; but it must be borne in mind that they are those, not of the author, but of the *dramatis personæ* presented by him.

"The Building of the Dream" tells how Squire Ebhart learnt from a magic scroll that if he were to ride forth under certain conditions he would reach a place where he would see realized the dreams of his youth. After various adventures he comes to a throne on which is seated a beauteous lady—

Whoever had the kiss
Of her red lips kiss'd never woman more,
Having attained the shore
Of that supernal bliss the ancients sought
So long.

In her company his soul is steeped in ravishment, but the joy proves too great for him. The ineffable bliss is harder to bear than the preceding woes. He tells his mind to the lady, she with sadness permits him to depart, and he dies. The poem is crowded with beauties, nor could it be otherwise, descriptive as it is of a land where the white moon pours "full hands of pearl upon the breezy moors," and where the starry lily petals unfold beneath their "golden-gauffred green."

"The Romance of Sir Floris" is equally rich in striking pictures. Now and again an unusual word is used, but always with effect, as in the description of the magic boat with its "prow of cymophane," and in the couplet:

The flowers seemed zaffirin¹ and blue,
And crystal-clear with wonder dew.

These poems reveal the influence on Payne of the German ballad-writers, especially Bürger, whose "Lenore" was at the time very popular in this country.

Among those to whom Payne sent copies were Joseph Knight, the literary critic, who was described by Lord Lytton as "the most conscientious reviewer in England,"²

¹ Zaffre is a cobalt used for painting on glass.

² Letter to O'Shaughnessy, 8 July, 1874.

Browning, Matthew Arnold, Madox Brown, D. G. Rossetti,¹ and Swinburne. In a letter to O'Shaughnessy of 27 September, 1870, Knight says: "I see your work is dedicated to Mr. Payne, from whom I received a volume of poems of high merit. Flattered as I was by its receipt, I never acknowledged it for the reason that I was stupid enough not to be able to ascertain who was the sender until the time for writing was past." Knight and Payne subsequently became friends, and Knight was in the habit of praising Payne's work whenever opportunity offered.

D. G. Rossetti wrote on 7 November, 1870:

"MY DEAR PAYNE,—

"You see I've scratched out *Sir*, which I hope you will let drop between us. Will you dine with me on Wednesday at 7? I've asked O'Shaughnessy and Knight. Nettleship, I suppose, must be given up for the present.

"When I last met you I had hardly any knowledge of your volume, which I had only just succeeded in borrowing from Madox Brown. I now have to thank you for the copy so kindly sent, and need not say my acquaintance with it is largely increased, though I have not yet read the last poem. Of the three I have read, I think on the whole 'The Building of the Dream' is my favourite, though the metre of the 'Masque' seems to be much better suited to a poem of any length. On the other hand, the 'Rime of Redemption' has incomparably the finest groundwork of the three as regards its subject, . . . In the B. of D., the description of the fairy lady is worthy of the finest examples of this kind of romance, and the incidental song is exquisite in structure. This (as, indeed, the others are too) is full of imaginative picture work to quite a remarkable degree and conveys most notably that sense of the poet's self-enjoyment which is indispensable to the enjoyment of the tender. Much more in this direction I might say . . . But I am sure you will be best pleased by my giving my whole

¹ Inscription "Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Esq., a token (such as it is) of admiration of Mr. Rossetti's genius."

opinion on your work. I think then that the pouring forth of poetical material is the greatest danger against which an affluent imagination has to contend, and in my own view it needs not only a concrete form of some kind, but immense concentration brought to bear on that also, before material can be said to have become absolutely anything else. If this is neglected the time is apt to come soon when the poet finds that he has written as much as anyone can ever read, the work being, in fact, what ought on another plan of production to have occupied his lifetime. Self-repetition is certainly the quality which must be absolutely eradicated from work before it can be looked upon as finally dealt with, and nothing but the most complete attention will ever eradicate this. I hope I do not seem presumptuous in undertaking to indicate solely on grounds of study—not of personal pretension on my part—what seems to me to be perhaps your rock ahead. . . . I should be very much interested to see the Ballads and Poems you announce, as well as the Sonnets, since I judge these must belong to the order of work on which I should expect you finally to rely for success. Will you bring something with you on Wednesday (if, as I hope, you can come then) and read it to us?

“Ever yours,

“D. G. ROSSETTI.”

On 23 October, 1870, Ford Madox Brown wrote :

“MY DEAR MR. PAYNE,—

“I trust my long silence with respect to your poems which you so kindly sent me may not be interpreted as want of sympathy with them. When Mr.¹ Garnett sent me the book I was on the point of starting for the North, and I was unwilling to write and thank you without having first perused the volume. Since, we have read the book more than once, and with increased conviction of the high merits of it as poetry and the extraordinary mastery it displays in the matter of versification and melody. A remarkable instance of

¹ Afterwards Dr.

this is the song in 'The Building of the Dream,' which is as delightful in cadence to the ear as it is beautiful to look at as a piece of decorative painting. The sonnet at the beginning has given all who have read it most unbounded satisfaction. Dr. Hueffer¹ last night dictated (straight off) a very beautiful and faithful translation of it into German. The two central poems, 'The Rime of Redemption' and 'The Building of the Dream,' have the most hold on our sympathies. 'The Rime of Redemption' both for sustained ring of melody and completeness of excitement carried on in story is perhaps the one that gives most satisfaction.

"I should wish to arrange some evening on which the other poets, Rossetti, Morris,² etc., could meet you here. Would next Wednesday or Thursday suit you, should I be able to secure the chief of the others for the same night?"

Mrs. Snee, writing to O'Shaughnessy 24 October, 1870, says: "Don't omit to thank Mr. Payne for me for his kindness and courtesy in sending me the book. I am very sensible of the honour, and shall prize it greatly."

We find D. G. Rossetti inviting O'Shaughnessy, Payne, and Joseph Knight to dine with him on Thursday, 17 November; and on 28 November Madox Brown writes to Payne: "The drawing I promised to let you see before it goes off is finished. Could you dine here at 7 on Wednesday? I will ask O'Shaughnessy and Sidney Colvin,³ who wishes to meet you."

Browning acknowledged the receipt of his copy of *The Masque of Shadows* on 11 June, 1871, describing the poems as "a gift indeed to be thankful for."

As we said, a copy of *The Masque of Shadows* was sent to Swinburne, who had also received a copy of *An Epic of Women*. Thirty-five years later Swinburne said to me: "I well remember the incident. Two young poets sent me their first volumes, O'Shaughnessy and Payne.

¹ Franz Hueffer (1845-1889) took degree Ph.D. at Göttingen in 1869. He married in 1872 Catherine, younger daughter of Madox Brown. A distinguished musical critic, he published in 1874 his remarkable book, *Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future*.

² William Morris.

³ Now Sir Sidney Colvin.

O'Shaughnessy's had no merit,¹ but I saw at once that Payne was a true poet. His 'Rime of Redemption' is a masterpiece." Payne was desirous of making Swinburne's acquaintance, and the following note written by Madox Brown from 37 Fitzroy Square on (Friday) 7 July, 1871, is therefore of interest: "My dear Payne,—I think I have heard you say you would like to meet Swinburne. He has promised to be here Sunday. If not otherwise engaged we shall be glad if you will look in about 9." Payne took advantage of the opportunity, consequently the two poets first met on Sunday, 9 July, 1871, and a friendship at once sprang up between them.

In the meantime the elder Payne and his family had removed from London to Shrubhill House, Box,² Wiltshire, a lone but pretty spot where the three counties of Wilts, Gloucester and Somerset meet, close to Box Tunnel. Adjoining the house was a beautiful garden, which went down in terraces to an orchard. Here "dear old Auntie Payne" joined them, and here she died at the great age of eighty-eight. John used to go to Shrubhill, Box, for the apple gathering, and we have recollections of that season in "The Building of the Dream" ("Toss'd seas of apple snow"),³ and in other poems.

"Tell mamma," he once wrote, "to have plenty of puppies and babies to roll down the grassy banks." He used to climb into the apple trees, and his sisters Frances, Annie, and Nora were expected to take the fruit from his hands and dance attendance on him generally. But he was dictatorial and impatient. "I shall not call you separately," he said, "so I will give you one name to include all three—Fanora. When I call Fanora, the nearest one is to come." And she had to.

One of the most noticeable features in Payne's character was his extreme—his painful—shyness. For example, Browning once invited him to his house in De Vere Gardens, Hyde Park Gate, and Payne went, but on seeing a number of carriages at the door he was so overcome

¹ Swinburne was far too sweeping. In this work O'Shaughnessy showed himself a poet of considerable promise.

² The house is still standing.

³ *Collected Poems*, i. p. 80.

by this particular weakness that he turned round and walked straight home again. Wherever he went this troublesome characteristic accompanied him. Thus although he often travelled on the continent with his three sisters (and a big bag), and although he spoke French fluently, he would force Nora, and even Frances—though she was then only a schoolgirl—to ask the way, make purchases, etc., in French. At hotels he would, if possible, have a bedroom that could be approached only through the apartment occupied by his sisters. Indeed, he was never comfortable unless there was a barrier of some kind between himself and the world. Their travels took them to Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland. He knew every stone in Belgium and South Germany, and its literary association. Another of his characteristics was his excessively impassioned temperament. His friends recall the violent way in which he gave expression to his ultra-conservatism, with the result, occasionally, of giving deep offence to men of more moderate views. Once, when he and his sisters were crossing the Mer de Glace at the top of Mont Blanc, he stopped and wrote on the ground with his alpen-stock, “Damn Bright and Gladstone.” But standing on the roof of Europe he was not solely occupied in airing his political leanings. The ice, the snow, the panorama spread before him found reflection subsequently in that series of poems on mountain and hill that form so conspicuous a feature in his various volumes of original poetry.¹ His muse, like lunary, revelled on the heights. The letters written in the snow must have been obliterated within a few moments, but his poems will endure as long as Mont Blanc himself.

Then, too, he had a peculiar and pawky humour, which manifested itself wherever he went and whatsoever the topic of conversation. In the Museum at Amsterdam he was particularly interested in an enormous iguanodon. At Haarlem the hotels were overcrowded, and the chops with which the party was served proved not only very large, but very tough. Payne, pointing with a fork

¹ See especially *Vigil and Vision*, pp. 14, 15.

to one of them, exclaimed solemnly, "Iguanodon chops."

Thanks to a lithe body and an ardent temperament he was a very rapid walker. He tore through the streets of the different towns they visited with tremendous strides. His sister Nora would be just behind him, Annie behind her, and Frances round the last corner, trying not to catch them up (that was hopeless), but to keep them in view if possible. If he did not lose his sisters it was not his fault. And so they did the continent.

Sometimes his eagerness and unbridled impatience produced inconvenient sequels. On one occasion he and his sisters had been walking and riding all day in the neighbourhood of Bruges (Bruges being especially tiring owing to its cobbles), and he had not allowed them to have a meal, simply because he himself had not wanted one. They arrived dead tired and ravenously hungry at the quaint little Hôtel de l'Univers, and seated themselves for dinner, but there was rum in the pudding (that was the finishing touch), and Frances had no sooner tasted it than she went into a dead faint. Nora rang the bell, the landlady, plump and voluble, ran in and water was demanded and obtained. Payne, sincerely troubled, made impracticable suggestions, and the landlady, who looked on anxiously, exclaimed from time to time: *S'est-elle remis de son évanouissement?*" (Has she got over her fainting fit?).

The following year the sightseeing was conducted on precisely the same lines. Again Payne, with his seven league boots, and lost to everything but the associations of the place, strode maniacally about the country, his sisters toilsomely following in the near or dim distance. Once more, dog-tired, they reached the same hotel, there was the same plump, voluble landlady, the same table, the same chair in which Frances had fainted. As before, the whole party was famished. Frances remembered the incident of the fainting, and turning to Nora said, "I won't sit in that chair."

"Superstition!" said Nora scornfully, "then I will."

But she had no sooner seated herself than she in her turn went off into a dead faint.

The landlady, putting up her hands in confusion, cried out: "Les dames anglaises—se sont encore une fois évanouies" (The English ladies have again fainted). Payne's impracticable suggestions, the bringing of water, and the other accessories of the previous occasion were all repeated; and it ultimately dawned on Payne that to take one's sisters about on the continent is not unattended with responsibility.

"In every country we visited," says Mrs. Byam, "he ordered the national wine and dish—his favourite being *perdrix aux choux*,¹ and whether we liked it or not we had to have it."

As regards religion, Payne, though an ardent admirer of the Bible, the rhythm and beauty of which he was never tired of extolling, and though both in poem and conversation a eulogist of the life and teaching of our Lord, was not in the habit of attending a place of worship. When his sister Frances said that she liked to attend a place of worship he commented: "Quite right, you need it. Ordinary people do. I don't." In these early days he was an Emersonian, later he embraced the ideas of Schopenhauer, whence, says he, "I found an abiding harbour for my soul in the spiritual uplands of the Vedanta."² Later, he simply described himself as a pantheist. That the views of the pantheist would, however, receive large acceptance he did not believe. "Abstract truths," he said, "the mysteries of the ideal are not to be understood of the vulgar."

He was young in appearance, and always "kept a very young heart." He liked bright colours, and he wore an orange tie passed through a gold ring. A magenta handkerchief usually peeped out of his side pocket.

¹ Partridges and cabbage.

² See his remarks on the *Vedas*, pref. to *Omar Kheyyam*, p. xlv., and his sonnet "Vedantasara," in *Vigil and Vision*, p. 97.

CHAPTER IV

THE RISING POET

1871-1872

IN 1871 appeared the volume of sonnets *Intaglios*, which had been stopped by the war. Many of them are remarkable for their delicacy and lyrical sweetness. Swinburne, who described them as "exquisite and clear cut," selected for particular praise "Sleepers and One that watches."¹ Others ranked the sonnet "On Leconte de Lisle's Prose Translation of Homer" with Keats's sonnet on Chapman's translation. Naturally there are fine lines on Rabelais—the man who pitted his "laughter against wrong"; and this and the sonnets called "Winter Roses" Ford Madox Brown regarded as "poetry of the highest order."² D. G. Rossetti, who received a copy,³ placed pencil marks on the list of contents against the sonnets that most attracted him, as many as twelve⁴ being thus indicated; and in the body of the book five⁵ passages are similarly singled out.

Writing on 25 March, 1871, Rossetti said:

"DEAR PAYNE,—

"Thanks for the kind gift of your *Intaglios*.

¹ Founded on a sketch by Simeon Solomon. Solomon died in 1905, aged sixty-three.

² Letter to Payne, 14 March, 1871.

³ Lent me by Mr. Cecil Floersheim by request of Mr. St. Clair Baddeley.

⁴ "A Tropic Flower," "Winter Roses," "Evocation," "Belphebe," "Madonna dei Sogni," "Jacob and the Angel," "On the Borders of the Night," "Bride Night," "Love's Epitaph," "Indian Isle," "Westering Hope," "Silentia Lunae."

⁵ P. 6 "Linnet" line; p. 31 "It is" line; p. 49 "Greying west" line; p. 58 "Brodered gown" line, and last five lines of "Indian Isle," p. 62.

I have only had a reading in sequence of the whole as yet; and such poetry is not suited to such reading, but should rather be equipped for the favourable functions when a sonnet is taken up singly and has all one's thoughts to itself. . . . The sonnets which seem to me now to have perhaps most striking value in thought or expression are the "Tropic Flower" (well-remembered from reading), the fourth of "Winter Roses," the second of "Evocation," the tenth of "Madonna dei Sogni," "Jacob and the Angel," the first of "Borders of the Night," "Bride Night" (these two last mentioned seem to me best of all, I think), . . . "Love's Epitaph," "Indian Isle," "Hope" and "Silentia." Having written out these titles, I fear the verdict on such short acquaintance seems rather pretentious. I may say—only as a first impression also—that about one-half of the book perhaps seems to add little to the other half, and that if so, according to my own canons, the book would have contained more, in the highest sense, if shorn of its less representative moiety. On the whole, it certainly seems to me that this volume brings you before the reader more in the truest spirit of your work than did the other one. Its best points are exquisitely rendered.

"Again thanking you, believe me,

"Very truly yours,

"D. G. ROSSETTI."

On 19 June, 1871, Théodore de Banville, the eminent French poet, to whom *Intaglios* had been dedicated, wrote to Payne: "When your fine book of sonnets—gems—reached me I was in bed, very ill. I have been greatly moved by the honour you have paid me, and am extremely proud to accept the dedication of these admirable verses." He then says he has been reading them with M. Stéphane Mallarmé, who was about to visit London and hoped to call on Payne in order to tell him how he and his friends had been impressed by the sonnets.

On 28 June, 1871, Matthew Arnold, writing from Harrow in acknowledgment of the copy of *Intaglios* which Payne had sent him, said: "It answered my

expectations—which from what I had heard and seen were considerable—in the undeniable power of poetic thought and phrase shown in it. This, after all, is what separates, by a broad line, the genuine article from the counterfeit. I marked the sonnets at pp. 9, 19, 25, 45, and 77 as giving me most pleasure. I think it will be found that these are sonnets in which you had a more than usually definite subject to go upon; and if I might give you advice, it would be this, to take a distinct subject and force yourself to treat it distinctly in a poem of greater length than the sonnet. The sonnet is an alluring form, but I doubt if it does not, when too much followed, disincubate one for others which, after all, can do what it cannot do. On the other hand, in no form does the composer mark more clearly whether he is essentially poetical or prosaic; and your production distinctly stamps itself as poetical.”

While Payne and O'Shaughnessy were steadily winning recognition, the third member of the Triumvirate, J. T. Nettleship, had met with scarcely any encouragement, and this condition of things sometimes filled his heart with bitterness. Mrs. Snee said of him: “It must be the very core of misery to see nothing around him but success, and for himself always failure,”¹ and she further speaks of him as “the great giant that he might have been, that he still is to himself.”² Ideas sprang up in his mind as thick as blades of corn, but his “executive unadaptabilities were glaring.”³

The influence still exercised over him by Blake is seen in his designs “God creating Evil,” “Prostituted Genius returning to her first love for the Truth,” and “Jacob and the Angel.” The last provoked the admiration of Payne, who in a fiery sonnet declares that the Jacob is none other than Nettleship himself.

Alas! 'tis I that speak!
Not Jacob. I that in this night of days
Do wrestle with the angel Art, till breath
And gladness fail me.

¹ and ² Letters to O'Shaughnessy, 25 January, 1870.

³ *Rossetti Papers*, p. 339.

For a second volume of poems which O'Shaughnessy was preparing for the press Nettleship also supplied drawings. Their character, however, perturbed the respectable publisher, and the following letter concerning one of them was received by O'Shaughnessy: "25 Bouverie Street. 9 September, 1871. *Re* Nettleship's drawing, one of the proprietors has seen it and has given a most decided opinion, and that I am sorry to say is against it. If a little drapery were introduced, my worthy master would probably not object. The British public has to be studied.—Fred G. Lister Inglis."

Whether or not this drawing was intended for the volume which was subsequently (1872) published with the title of *Lays of France* is uncertain; but we can imagine the bursts of ironic laughter with which Payne and O'Shaughnessy greeted this letter, and we can imagine also Nettleship's fury.

Eventually Nettleship struck out a new line—that of animal painting. As early, indeed, as 20 March, 1870, we find William Rossetti calling to see "Nettleship's picture of a Lion and Lioness going out to prey by moonlight," and describing it "as exceedingly fine in essentials."

On 6 December, 1871, De Banville writes ¹ to Payne ²: "I am delighted to hear that you are coming to Paris in a few months' time, and that you will do me the kindness of paying me a visit. You will find my home very humble, and very modest, for, as you know, Poets in France are poor, but I hope you will let me receive you fraternally with all the love and admiration that I have for you."

On 5 February, 1872, De Banville writes to thank Payne for translating so well into English two of his Ballads.³ As in the copy that was used one stanza was wanting, Payne supplied it himself.

"I am sorry," says De Banville, "about the verse left out." Then follow the missing lines. "The verse

¹ To 37 Upper Marylebone Street.

² This is a translation. All De Banville's letters to Payne were written in French.

³ One of them, "The Ballad of the Common Folk," was included in Payne's next volume of poems, *Songs of Life and Death*, 1884.

which you have been good enough to compose in order to fill the gap is very well thought out and admirably expressed, its only fault being the use of the word *ripaille*, which is always rather objected to, as it conveys an idea of debauchery and wantonness. But how few poets there are who, in their own tongue, could fill in, as cleverly as you, a verse omitted from a ballad! Nothing could better reveal your marvellous gifts as a poet."

On 22 February, 1872, he writes: "How can I thank you for the numberless kindnesses you have done me. I have carried out your commission in respect to Mallarmé. When he read me the two ballads, which you translated so admirably, he made me feel all their rhythm and music. What richness! what versatility! one must possess to make such a translation. It is one of the most impossible of all impossible accomplishments. But I know that nothing is too difficult for you, and that you are a perfect master of your art. We are waiting impatiently for you in Paris. You are coming soon, are you not? Mallarmé¹ tells me that you are thinking of going to Australia, and I should be deeply grieved if I did not know that for you English going to and coming from Australia is a smaller matter than going to and coming from Versailles is for us. However, if the decision were to rest with me, I would make you stay in our old Europe."

From De Banville's reference to Mallarmé one judges that the latter had been calling on Payne in London. In any case it was in London that the two poets first met. Payne described Mallarmé to me as "a bright little brown creature of the Parisian type—a charming letter-writer—full of ideas. Among his characteristics were extraordinary persistence and patience under discouragement." He was often seen trotting about Bloomsbury with an elephant folio under his arm, its contents being his translation of Poe's *Raven*,² with illustrations

¹ Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898).

² Published in Paris in 1875. Payne's copy was inscribed "A John Payne, ses amis, Stéphane Mallarmé, E. Manet."

by Manet. Payne and Mallarmé became "brothers"; and in the Dedication prefixed to the 3rd edition of the *Villon* Payne calls his friend "one of the sweetest souls that ever sanctified humanity."

In April 1872¹ Payne published his *Songs of Life and Death*, in which appeared "The Westward Sailing," "May Margaret," "Sir Erwin's Questing," and other striking ballads. Among the most remarkable poems in the volume is that entitled "France," written in 1871, that is during the Franco-German war. After expressing his sympathy with the stricken nation he cries:

Shall not God help thee and deliver thee
From whom the world has taken liberty?

and he prophesies the time when England shall join with France "and slay the twy-necked vulture in his den." Like the poet and prophet of old time, Payne was also a seer. Forty-three years were to elapse ere the union of England and France against the common foe came about, but Payne lived to see it, though not to see the glorious termination of the war. The songs in the book, like those of Heine's *Lorelei*, are "songs with a marvellous olden and magical melody." Its merits were recognized by Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, D. G. Rossetti,² and Swinburne. Watts-Dunton wrote long afterwards (1 December, 1902) respecting the work of Payne in general: "it has more imagination than the work of any other living man save one"—meaning, of course, Swinburne.

D. G. Rossetti wrote 6 May, 1872:

"MY DEAR PAYNE,—

"I will not delay thanking you for your new book, though as yet only from a partial acquaintance with it. But I have read quite enough to see that it displays the same unfailing command of accomplished workmanship as your other volumes. . . . It seems to me (if you

¹ Ford Madox Brown acknowledged the receipt of his copy on 1 May, 1872.

² Five letters of D. G. Rossetti to Payne (1870-72) were sold at Sotheby's, 29 June, 1916.

will pardon me saying so) that what you now need is, never to write except to embody a conception which you feel sure to be a separate and distinct one. In the present volume, one might almost say that the most clearly marked piece is "Shadow Soul," which presents a definite profession of indefiniteness. Such a course as I venture to think your true one for the future would no doubt greatly circumscribe your productiveness, but would by this very fact, I feel sure, increase the true bulk and volume of your available work.

"If I have spoken with some frankness, I must ask you to excuse it, and to believe me

"Very truly yours,

"D. G. ROSSETTI."

An appreciative review was also written by (Sir) Sidney Colvin. Mrs. Tracy Robinson¹ has observed of one of the poems in this volume—"Shadow Soul"—that "in certain moods Payne becomes the spokesman of the people." . . . "No reader," she continues, "could look below the surface of 'Shadow Soul' without realizing that a broad humanity is the essential element underlying all his poems." In the following verse this characteristic is particularly prominent:

Haply one day these songs of mine
 Some world-worn mortal may console
 With savour of the bitter wine
 Of tears crushed out from a man's dole;
 And he may say, tears in his eyne,
*There was great love in this man's soul!*²

On 23 October, 1872, died Théophile Gautier, poet and critic—"the greatest critic," said Payne, who ever lived. At the request of the publisher Lemerre, Payne, Swinburne, Victor Hugo, Anatole France, and François Coppée wrote poems which were included in a publication entitled *Le Tombeau de Théophile Gautier*, 1873.³

¹ Lucy Catlin Robinson, first wife of Payne's friend Tracy Robinson.

² *Songs of Life and Death*, p. 132.

³ For Payne's contribution see *New Poems*, p. 6, and *Collected Poems*, ii. 211.

CHAPTER V

TRIAL OF MRS. SNEE. *VILLON* AND *NEW POEMS*

1873-1880

PAYNE's long promised visit to Paris took place in 1873, and he stayed with Mallarmé. Madame Mallarmé taught Payne cookery, and he became an expert in the art, and thenceforward, to his great joy, he could himself prepare for the table his favourite *perdrix aux choux*. Mallarmé took him to see De Banville and Leconte de Lisle.¹ Théodore De Banville, Payne described to me as very bald, clean shaven, and young looking—one of the best and kindest men he ever knew. To Payne's amusement, Alphonse Lemerre, the publisher, used to tap De Banville on the chest, and say, with one tap for each syllable, "The-o-ville de Ban-dore." Payne translated more of De Banville's poems into English,² and the two friends continued to correspond.

Payne used to describe Charles Marie Leconte de Lisle as a "big man with a sculptural head, and a large impressive face—an intellectual Cromwell—for he was of the Huguenot type—a marble colossus—a monument of impermeability—no man could get at him—and his handwriting was characteristic of him."

Leconte de Lisle, who had seen Payne's first three volumes (one of which, *Intaglios*, his sister had translated into French prose), once said to Payne, "I admire Swinburne, but when he is translated into French nothing is left of him but mere words—all the charm evaporates;

¹ In 1886 he succeeded to Victor Hugo's chair at the Academy.

² E.g. "The Ballad of the King's Orchard," *New Poems*, p. 14.



MRS. HELEN SNEE.

From a photograph taken in London about 1874.

[To face p. 48.

when, however, I translate you the fundamental thought remains and is striking."

Payne also met Catulle Mendès (who took him to see Victor Hugo), François Coppée, Henri Cazalis, Maurice Bouchor,¹ Auguste Vitu, the theatrical critic and writer on Villon, Anatole France, Judith Gautier (daughter of the great Théophile), Villiers de L'Isle Adam,² Jules La Forge, Emile Blémont,³ and Augusta Holmes.

Victor Hugo once said of Payne: "He knows French literature better than any Frenchman."

In 1873 O'Shaughnessy married Eleanor, elder daughter of Dr. Westland Marston; and Payne's sister Annie became the wife of Mr. John Mostyn Pritchard. Mr. and Mrs. Pritchard resided for a few years at 29 Queen's Gate. The debt Payne owed to his sister Annie cannot be estimated. He was proud of her appearance, for she was very beautiful. People turned round to look at her. And yet her looks were only a secondary consideration. To her brother she was both sibyl and critic. She listened with rapt attention to his poems, she advised, she prophesied success. Every stab which he received wounded her; every victory filled her heart with joy. But she was not only a devoted friend to her brother, she was also a woman of real insight and exquisite taste. Her criticisms of his work revealed a lofty and cultured mind. Writing to me, 7 April, 1916, and referring to these early years, she said: "He spent whole days out of doors walking, really long distances, talking or reading nearly the whole time to me. I was deeply attached to him; and recognized his real genius." She was truly the Golden Sister.

Nora, the second sister, I met at Mrs. Pritchard's. She was kind, generous, and thoroughly good at heart,⁴ but

¹ In Payne's *Flowers of France* will be found translations from all these writers.

² See *Omar Kheyyam*, xxiv., footnote, and the sonnet to him, *Vigil and Vision*, p. 63.

³ See also *Flowers of France: The Latter Days*, vol. i. pp. 38-40.

⁴ "Nora in spite of her hard skin is the finest gold underneath, and, though she hurts me terribly sometimes, I suppose she can't help it."—Letter of Harry Payne to his wife, 1 June, 1816.

she was also masterful and unconciliatory. Payne, who was always short with her, called her "Napoleon." She was indeed too much like her brother for them to be continuously on the best of terms, though for his genius she had an immense admiration. She loved him with a love that was more than love, and never lost an opportunity of sticking pins into him.

The third and youngest sister, Frances (Mrs. Byam), who in appearance strikingly resembles her brother John, it is my privilege to number among my most intimate friends—the bond having been in the first instance our common admiration for the genius of her brother; but I came to value her, as would anyone, for her own sake. Her vivacity is among her outstanding characteristics. Her company wakes in those who meet her all their finer instincts, and I think her brother also felt that influence, though he must often have smiled, as I too have smiled, at her curious and unwarrantable foible of self-detraction.

With most of his kinsfolk, however (nay, with all at certain times), John had differences, and once in a moment of irritation he said "God sends friends, the devil sends relatives."

In 1874 Payne produced *A Study of Rabelais*, which is still in manuscript. It contains some forcible writing. Describing the condition of Europe at the close of the fifteenth century, he says: "Popes and priests sold passes to heaven for the gold that should enable them to convert earth into hell. The clear day of loving faith in God and confidence in His goodness had faded out before the mists of the ages; and in its stead reigned the hopeless night—a night black with unimaginable horrors, foul with awful larvæ of bygone beliefs. God seemed to have deserted the people, and they turned to Devil-worship." Prophet after prophet had failed to dispel this darkness. Then arose Rabelais, and he with his "noble, frank, and joyous faith in nature and humanity" did not fail. Of Rabelais' object in writing his masterpiece, Payne says: "He proposed to construct upon the basis of a popular legend and in the guise of

an allegorical romance a monumental work that should contain the quintessence of human wisdom brought to bear upon the ills and sufferings of the time." Friar John (the first great character in Rabelais), "who cannot sleep comfortably at night if he have not in the day done some heroic action," Payne considers to be a portrait of Rabelais himself. Pantagruel (the second great character) is styled "a truly kingly figure, whose voice is ever heard above the roar of the tempest and through the blackness of the night, crying 'Courage, friends, I see land. I see the day beginning to break.' " Panurge (the third great character) is declared to be "one of the most humorous and original figures ever drawn." Payne accentuates the fact that Rabelais in his Prologue invites people to search deeply for the meaning under the outer shell of buffoonery, whence the book is to be compared to the grotesque statues of Silenus, which, being opened, were found to contain golden images of the gods." The essay is accompanied by an outline of Rabelais' life (1483-1553) and an account of the martyrdom of Rabelais' great friend Etienne Dolet,¹ who was burnt alive in Paris in 1543.

About this time Payne had a kindness for Emma Luey, daughter ² of Madox Brown (she too was a painter), and she certainly had for him a genuine regard; but on 31 March, 1874, she exchanged, as one of Payne's friends said, "a tongue of flame for an icicle," becoming the wife of William Rossetti. The episode had been on Payne's part merely a brief intoxication. A few bitter epigrams ³ at the expense of the bridegroom and of women in general, and all was forgotten.

On 5 November, 1874, died, at the age of seventeen, her half-brother, that Chatterton of Art, Oliver Madox Brown. Broken by the shock, Ford Madox Brown withdrew from society, and his house ceased to be a meeting-place for lovers of the Muses. "Hardly a soul came near it." ⁴

¹ Payne wrote in 1880 an Essay on Dolet. See p. 68.

² Only daughter of Madox Brown by his first marriage. She was born 19 July, 1843.

³ See chapter xvi, p. 213.

⁴ *Ford Madox Brown*, by Ford M. Hueffer.

Payne commemorated the sad event by an "In Memoriam" poem.¹

In 1875 we find Payne on terms of friendship with Max Eberstadt and George Lewis,² who was married to Eberstadt's sister, and he was often a guest at Lewis's town house, 88 Portland Place, and at his country home, Ashley Cottage, Walton-on-Thames.

In these early days Payne was a partner in the firm of Newman and Payne, their place of business being 13 Clifford's Inn. In 1875 Payne, who was regarded as a very clever lawyer in conveyancing and chancery practice, dissolved partnership with Newman, and removed to 3 Clifford's Inn, where he employed as clerk Mr. Coulson Mead, a young man, who remained with him for twenty years, as long indeed as he continued to practise, and who was in touch with him for many years afterwards. Of Payne's extreme kindness to and consideration for Mr. Mead, who was devoted to his chief, many instances could be cited. Payne, indeed, as a giver was most generous in individual cases.

It must have been about this time that Payne entered upon the resolve to translate into English the poems of the famous French robber-poet, Villon. By the middle of 1875 he had made considerable progress with the work. In May of that year we find him writing to Madox Brown in behalf of a friend in order to enquire the price for a painting of some children. In the reply, 29 May, Madox Brown invited Payne to dine at Fitzroy Square on the following day. He says: "We shall be quite alone and very glad to see you again, though you can understand that those who remind us most intimately of our poor boy are more hard to face than greater strangers."

On 3 June Madox Brown tells Payne that he will be glad to hear some of the translations from Villon, and adds that he believes it will be a great treat to Philip Marston to hear them also. The price for the portraits of the children had proved prohibitive. "Thank you," wrote Madox Brown, "for the trouble you gave your-

¹ *Collected Poems*, ii. 308.

² Afterwards Sir George Lewis.

self about the portraits, but I am not surprised at the result, for, you see, persons who do not buy pictures have always a difficulty to realize the fact that a row of good pictures may cost more than a row of good houses. It requires to be inured to the practice of giving such prices by little and little. P.S.—Of late I never leave Mrs. Brown long by herself of an evening, but I dare say there will be enough [in the *Villon*] that is readable for ladies' ears without the more objectionable passages."

For twelve months Payne had neither seen nor heard anything of Mrs. Snee, when in April 1876 the shocking news reached him that she had been arrested on a serious charge. Subsequent to September 1875 she and her husband had resided at 48 Crowndale Road, Camden Town. Her health had broken down, she was often in great pain, and her mind was unhinged. For long she had made a study of chemistry, and the desire to commit suicide sometimes came upon her. That she had ever really decided to take her life she herself strenuously denied, but she evidently wished to have by her a drug or some other medium which would enable her in a moment of intolerable agony to pass out of existence without anyone being able to suspect the cause. So she inserted in the *Daily Telegraph* for 18 February, 1876, the following advertisement: "To medical men in need of money, or students well up in chemistry and anatomy. A gentleman engaged in an interesting experiment is willing to give liberal remuneration for professional assistance.—W.Q., Post Office, Junction Road, Kentish Town, N.W."

A young medical student, William Kingston Vance, replied. She indicated her need, promising a solatium of £100, and signed her name William Quarll. A correspondence followed, but one of the letters, by mischance, found its way to the Dead Letter Office, and was opened by the police. As a result both the student and Mrs. Snee were arrested. The news no sooner spread than her old friends gathered staunchly round her. O'Shaughnessy and Payne consulted with Mr. Snee, and offered all possible help (Nettleship was away on his wedding

tour),¹ and Mrs. O'Shaughnessy wrote to Mrs. Snee letters full of sympathy as might be expected from a tender-hearted woman to a sister in distress. Payne, who acted as Mrs. Snee's attorney, wrote on 25 April, 1876, from 20 North Row, Park Lane, to O'Shaughnessy: "I have been since at work almost day and night in preparing for her defence. There can be no doubt, to those who know her, of her innocence; but fortune has been so cruel to her that it will be terribly uphill work to force conviction on strangers. I cannot tell what a cruel sorrow the poor little soul's misfortune is to me; but you no doubt feel it equally."

The first hearing took place at Bow Street on 21 April. On 25 April Mrs. Snee wrote to O'Shaughnessy: "I fear my unfortunate accomplice, whom I saw for the first time when he was charged with me at Scotland Yard, will be utterly ruined through me. I have resolved to touch nothing but bread and water, or sometimes coffee, until he too shall be free. I feel that nothing I can do can atone for the mischief I have done. He wrote many uncalled-for letters, and after a time they grew purely scientific, in fact on toxicology, which always somehow possessed a magnetic attraction for me, as anything relating in the slightest degree to chemistry always had.

Payne wrote to O'Shaughnessy on 27 April: "You are right in supposing that the incessant work that has been necessary has been a great solace; indeed, it has been the one thing which has kept my heart from breaking, and I can indeed appreciate the terrible addition to your grief the feeling of helplessness must be. But, nevertheless, I have comfort for you; the little soul has rallied in an extraordinary manner, and is wonderfully well and cheerful (I have just come from her), especially since I have procured permission to supply her with books and other little comforts, and, in particular (you will smile even in the midst of your misery), since I obtained leave for her to have a complete change of dress,

¹ He was married on 15 April to Miss Hinton, daughter of James Hinton, surgeon and metaphysician.

kept. I was with him in the morning
I was with him in the morning
I was with him in the morning
I was with him in the morning
I was with him in the morning
I was with him in the morning
I was with him in the morning
I was with him in the morning
I was with him in the morning
I was with him in the morning

Helene Snee

April 25th 1876.

25-4-76

Dear Mr. O'Shaughnessy
I have had your kind
message just brought through my
husband. Let me assure ^{you} that
great comfort it is to me under
these painful circumstances to
find that you can spare me a few
kindly thoughts.

I need not I know, to you, disclose
all in detail of the severe charge brought

REPRODUCTION OF PART OF LETTER BY MRS. HELEN SNEE TO
ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY.

(By permission of Mr. T. J. Wise.)

etc., so that she might be properly dressed to-morrow [second hearing at Bow Street]. They brought her away, as she says, in an old dress almost in rags, and it is a natural womanly feeling to be glad to be neat and nice again. I am much more sanguine than I was about the case, and I do hope to resist a committal to-morrow.

The same day Mr. Snee wrote to O'Shaughnessy:

"My dear Mr. O'Shaughnessy,—

"It is kind of you to try to cheer me in my misery. I have seen Helen again; she seems well in health, and was touched at hearing you had been to Clerkenwell. The sympathy that meets me at every turn is most cheering and needed. My heart is there between cold walls—a lifeless automaton is here. Many such days will kill me. Be assured I perfectly appreciate your suffering also."

The second hearing took place at Bow Street on 28 April.

Writing next day from the House of Detention to O'Shaughnessy, Mrs. Snee¹ says: "I have had a new light altogether and see that with ceaseless activity of hands and brains I have lost, wasted, and misapplied every faculty. If I escape from this terrible pass I mean to devote myself wholly and solely first to my dear husband, who has behaved so nobly, and then entirely to domestic duties and works of charity. . . . I shall seek emotion and excitement no more—not even of the most purely intellectual or artistic kind. It has been given to me to see what few see in this world, the robe of conventionalisms stripped off those I love, and the divine glory of the spirit revealed in full and overpowering radiance; I fall on my knees and worship this revelation. My heart is full to bursting with love and gratitude. I have dear George Herbert's poems to comfort me, and fine needle-work when I wish to sew."

Payne wrote to O'Shaughnessy on 30 April: "I have been so unwell that I have not stirred out since I came home yesterday, but be sure I will bear up by

¹ These letters from Newgate are on the official blue paper. The writing is thicker than that of the earlier letters.

sheer force of will and not break down. I understand Mr. Snee explained to you on Saturday what had taken place. The matter is not so bad as the newspaper reports make it out, although it is most distressing not to be able to get our poor little friend out of prison. . . . I, of course, saw her on Saturday afternoon, and found her at first much depressed, but I think I managed to cheer her up by showing her how anxious we were about her, and how unremitting would be our efforts to rescue her from her cruel position."

The third hearing at Bow Street took place on 5 May, when the prisoners were committed for trial "for unlawfully conspiring to kill and murder" Helen Snee.

While Mrs. Snee was in Newgate she was treated with the utmost consideration, and the letters which she received from her husband and Mr. and Mrs. O'Shaughnessy gave her inexpressible comfort. Payne, as her attorney, was able to see her in prison almost every day. She read books of biography, history, and travels, and anything about animals. Her one trouble was "the dead and awful silence" of the prison, but the regime was distinctly beneficial to her health.

The trial took place on Wednesday, 31 May, and Thursday, 1 June, before Mr. Justice Mellor. Nothing could be proved against Mrs. Snee except that she wished to procure certain drugs, or against the student except that he was prepared to supply them. The jury brought both prisoners in guilty—"for unlawfully conspiring to kill and murder" Helen Snee, but recommended both to mercy. They took the view that Mrs. Snee was a romantic lady and that her dabbling in the science and literature of suicide was mere dilettantism. The judge passed a sentence of eighteen months on Vance. In passing sentence on Mrs. Snee, he said (as reported in *The Times*): "As to the female prisoner, looking only at the circumstances, though there might be suspicions behind, he regarded her in the light of an unfortunate lady who had been tempted either by illness, the *ennui* of life, or some other motive; but he was willing to take her case on the supposition that there was nothing more

sinister behind it. She herself knew whether the whole truth of this matter had been discovered. But he should treat her simply on the evidence before him. It appeared she was an accomplished woman, with literary tastes, and having many inducements not to quarrel with the world. In the circumstances he should be failing in his duty if he passed on her a lighter sentence than imprisonment for six calendar months."

This was forty-two years ago. It is certain that at the present day justice would have been attempered with a far larger admixture of mercy.

The public deeply sympathized with Mrs. Snee, regarding the unfortunate lady as a subject for pity rather than animadversion, let alone punishment. Payne had the satisfaction of knowing that he had done his very utmost for his poor friend and that human nature could do no more. The sentence, however, was a terrible blow to him.

Early in 1877, at Payne's invitation, a number of his friends visited him at his rooms 20, North Row, Park Lane, in order to hear him read part of his translation of Villon.

Among those present were Mr. John H. Ingram¹ (the editor of Poe's works), Mr. Malcolm C. Salaman and Justin Huntley McCarthy, who was then an extraordinary boy writing for *The Examiner*. They were all so deeply interested that they agreed to assemble on another evening in order to hear the remainder of the work. On the second occasion Payne also read to them another poem which he had recently written, *Lautrec*, a vampire story. "We then," says Mr. Salaman, "decided to found a Villon Society for the purpose of publishing translations that an ordinary publisher would not bring out, and Payne's *Villon* was to be the first issue." Such was the origin of a Society which became world famous. The first secretaries were Mr. A. Granger Hutt and Mr. H. B. Wheatley. No books were published by the Society,

¹ John H. Ingram, born 1849, edited Poe's works with Memoir 1874, published life of Poe 1880, and *Oliver Madox Brown, a Biography*, 1884 (Payne possessed a copy of this work).

however, excepting those by Payne, all of whose subsequent works bore its imprint.

As early as 1875 Payne, who was an excellent Arabist, and had for some time been drawn to the masterpieces of the East, had resolved upon a translation of the *Arabian Nights*. He commenced his task in earnest on 5 February, 1877, that is just after the completion of the *Villon*, but with this subject we shall deal in a later chapter.

In April 1878 Payne wrote to ask De Banville whether any portrait of Villon was known. De Banville replied on 18 April, from Rue de l'Eperon :

“Dear Monsieur and Poet,—

“No portrait of Villon exists unless it be absolutely visionary. My friend, M. Alphonse Pégat ¹ who is a great *trouveur*, in vain sought one when he published his work entitled *Great French Poets*, and Villon is the only poet whose portrait he has been unable to give. But in his work on Villon he gives a very curious vignette representing some beings who have been hanged, and also a curious facsimile, printed in the Gothic edition of Jean Tripperel (15th century).

“As to Vitu, he has some very original and peculiar ideas on Villon and on certain passages in the known editions, which he believes to be incorrect; which ideas he has often explained to me in a very excited manner. If you have any questions to ask him he lives at 36 Avenue Wagram.

“You may imagine my happiness in learning that you, in your friendship, which I so greatly value, had dedicated to me your translation, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

Accompanying the letter is a *Ballade à John Payne, Traducteur de Villon*.

The manuscript of the *Villon* was still in the hands of the publishers on 4 September, 1878, for in a letter of that date Payne castigates them for occupying “more than four months in printing a little book of fewer than

¹ He then kept a bookshop, Librairie de l'Echo de la Sorbonne, 17 Rue Fontanes.



MRS. HELEN SNEE, SEPTEMBER 1877.

From a photograph by Beauchy y Rodriguez, Seville.

(Mr. and Mrs. Snee were taking a holiday in Spain at the time.)

[To face p. 58,

200 pages!" "Do," he says, "for goodness' sake, make an effort and let us get this nightmare business off our hands."

The edition was limited to 157 numbered copies. It may here be stated for convenience that a second (expurgated) edition appeared in 1881 and a third (complete) edition in 1892.

Even previous to the issue of the *Villon*, Payne, as we have seen, had begun to make a name, but it was not until the appearance of this splendid translation, made in the original metres of the French poet, that he really became famous. From 10 Rue de l'Eperon, Paris, De Banville wrote to him 16 October, 1878: "My dear Friend (You see I claim the title which you gave me on your first page, and I take possession of it as I would of a conquest), I received your fine *Villon* when I was in bed, for I have been poorly, otherwise I would have thanked you before. But, however touched and pleased I may be by your fraternal dedication, I must address to you my compliments before my thanks. What an honour you are conferring on France, and what a magnificent present you have made to England! Thanks to you she has now not only another poet, but another great poet, yet you have essentially kept to his French feeling. You have, indeed, made Villon one of your own poets, now and for ever. May God grant that we have here in France artists capable of performing similar wonders, and of rendering in a masterly manner into French your great compatriots. Alas! only one Englishman has been adequately rendered into our language, and that one, moreover, an American, Edgar Allan Poe. I have met many Frenchmen who pretend that they understand English; but I have known only one who could substantiate his claim, namely Baudelaire. I have never experienced a greater pleasure than in listening to him when he recites English verse. It sounds like the harmonizing accuracy of an instrument played by the skilled hand of an infallible musician. He has been reading to me your *Villon* . . . and I admire throughout its whole length the way in which you have kept to the move-

ment, the rhythm, the sonority and the evident meaning of the original. No, this is not a translation, it is an English Villon come to life. Now he belongs to you as much as to us. Victor Hugo, greatly fatigued by the numberless meetings at which he has had to preside, has been taking a rest for several months at Guernsey ; as soon as I am up I will try to find out the best means of sending him his copy." In the meantime De Banville had drawn the attention of M. Maurice Bouchor to the work. Writing to Payne 21 December, 1878, De Banville says : " Bouchor is all that is most charming, amiable and artistic. It was I who advised him to ask you for your *Villon*. He is a true and agreeable friend, and I should be delighted if he were to make your acquaintance. He knows English admirably ; all he does he does well. If you have not his books you ought to ask him for them. Inasmuch as the man pleases you, know the Poet. We have at last finished your *Villon* with the aid of Auguste Vitu, who has studied that great poet for more than thirty years and knows him through and through. He was amazed at the fidelity with which you had been able to transfer him to your language without mutilating him in any respect. Unfortunately his great work on Villon, which will consist of no fewer than three volumes, will not appear for several years. I think it would have helped you immensely. Indeed, he has made (in reference to the text) some very important discoveries. In respect to the hitherto unknown published texts, he obtains great help from the various manuscripts which he is collecting.

" Would you be so kind as to say whether you have read a long article on me by Andrew Lang in the *New Quarterly Review* ¹ of 21 October ? If you have this article by you and tell me what you think of it I shall be grateful."

Mallarmé also wrote enthusiastically of the *Villon*, but the greatest tribute of all came from Maurice Bouchor, who dealt with the subject in a long and searching review.

After pointing out the many difficulties that have to be encountered by any translator of Villon, M. Bouchor

¹ Reprinted in Andrew Lang's *Essays in Little*.

shows that Payne had most happily overcome them all. "We find," he continues, "in his translation the tone of mingled good humour and raillery, the heart-felt philosophy which gives to Villon's verse a charm superior to that of sheer artistic beauty . . . and the supple, vigorous and complex form that distinguish the original." After pointing out that Payne's translation answers exactly to the rhythm of the original, he quotes the magnificent stanzas upon "Death," of which Payne has fully rendered the energy :

XXXIX.

I know full well that rich and poor,
 Villein and noble, high and low,
 Laymen and clerks, gracious and dour,
 Wise men and foolish, sweet of show
 Or foul of favour, dames that go
 Ruffed and rebatoed, great or small
 High-tired or hooded, Death (I know)
 Without exception seizes all.¹

XL

Paris or Helen though one be,
 Who dies, in pain and drearhead,
 For lack of breath and blood dies he
 His gall upon his heart is shed ;
 Then doth he sweat, God knows how dread
 A sweat and none there is to allay
 His ills, child, kinsman, in his stead
 None will go bail for him that day

XLI.

Death makes him shiver and turn pale,
 Sharpens his nose and swells his veins,
 Puffs up his throat, makes his flesh fail,
 His joints and nerves greatens and strains
 Fair women's bodies, soft as skeins
 Of silk, so tender, smooth and rare,
 Must you too suffer all these pains ?
 Ay, or alive to heaven fare.²

Bouchor also singles out for special praise "The Ballad

¹ Edition of 1892, p. 34.

² We have followed the 1892 edition which differs slightly from that of 1881.

of Old Time Ladies,"¹ a poem which "every one knows by heart in France,"

Tell me where, in what land of shade,
 Bides fair Flora of Rome and where
 Are Thais and Archipiade,
 Cousins-german of beauty rare,
 And Echo, more than mortal fair,
 That, when one calls by river-flow
 Or marish, answers out of the air?
 But what is become of last year's snow?

Where did the learn'd Heloïsa vade,
 For whose sake Abelard might not spare
 (Such dole for love on him was laid)
 Manhood to lose and a cowl to wear?
 And where is the queen who willed whilere
 That Buridan, tied in a sack, should go
 Floating down Seine from the turret stair?
 But what is become of last year's snow?

To the subjects of the fleeting nature of worldly prosperity, the worthlessness of riches and of all physical advantages and the equality of all in death, Villon also turns in the "Ballad of Good Doctrine to those of ill life." Payne thus renders the most striking of the stanzas:

When I consider all the heads
 That in these charnels gathered be,
 Those that are sleeping in these beds
 May have (for aught that I can see)
 Been mighty lords of high degree,
 Bishops and dames—or else poor churls:
 There is no difference to me
 'Twixt waterearriers' bones and earls'.²

M. Bouchor's article concludes with a glowing tribute "to the patience, the solid erudition, the ease and subtle dexterity and the intrinsic poetical talent" which everywhere characterize the work. Indeed, all other translations of Villon are, compared with Payne's, either cheap tinsel or saltless commonplace. In Payne we have the translation of genius by genius. At home the work was

¹ Edition of 1892, p. 35.

² Edition of 1892, p. 97.

also received with a chorus of praise. Matthew Arnold wrote ¹ 24 May, 1879 :

“Dear Mr. Payne,—

“The translations are very good, but I am especially delighted with the Introduction. I have not read M. Longnon, but his predecessors were very barren and disappointing, whereas your Introduction is full of satisfactions for the lover of Villon’s poetry—and the lover of a man’s poetry will also have always a weakness for the man himself, and to this you are kind, too.

“Believe me, sincerely yours,

“MATTHEW ARNOLD.”

“In the field of translation,” said Dr. Garnett, “Mr. Payne is literally without a rival.” The *Westminster Review* and other periodicals bestowed upon it many encomiums.

When I asked Payne where Villon is at his best he replied : “I would not underrate his ballads, but he is at his best in Octaves 12 to 62 of the ‘Greater Testament.’ This passage is one uninterrupted flow of humour, satire and pathos.”

Another literary event of the same year, 1878, was the publication of the vampire poem *Lautrec*.

In January and April 1879 Payne published anonymously in the *New Quarterly Review* specimens of his proposed translation of the *Nights*, and throughout the year he laboured sedulously at his project.

In a letter to Payne of 7 February, 1879, Madox Brown makes some reference to a literary gathering at which Payne had been the most acceptable speaker. He says : “My wife and daughters ² and Miss Blind ³ have been bullying me about the way I performed my duties as chairman the other evening. I ought to apologize to you or explain that my remarks were intended for Mr. Cronin ⁴ : your speech contained more valuable information than

¹ From the Athenæum Club.

² Mrs. Wm. Rossetti and Mrs. Hueffer.

³ Mathilde Blind, the translator.

⁴ Also referred to as an “old fogey.”

all the others on that Japanese occasion, and but for the inordinate prolixity of Cronin and others would have been just what was wanted."

The following letter, written from 20 North Row, Park Lane, 24 February, 1879, is interesting as showing Payne's connection with Charles Godfrey Leland¹ ("Hans Breitmann"), the gypsy enthusiast:

"Dear Mr. Leland,—As I feared, I found it quite impossible to come to you on Saturday, notwithstanding my great desire to do so; but I hope to call on you without fail on Saturday evening next with or without my friend Dr. Cazalis.

"Very truly your brother in Rabelais,

"JOHN PAYNE."

In February 1880 appeared *New Poems*, which included "Salvestra," "Thorgerda," "The Ballad of Isobel," and the villanelle commencing "The Air is White,"² all of which were already familiar to Payne's friends, who had heard him read them at Madox Brown's castle.³ The book, which is full of beautiful poetry, contains echoes of Villon. Sometimes Payne falls into a melancholy strain—for the subject of death is a frequent one in his poems; but he is not long in that mood, as the "Ritournel," and other poems, the result of his oriental studies, sufficiently indicate. Unfortunately the reception accorded to the volume was disappointing.

Writing from 3 Clifford's Inn on 11 February, 1880, to Mr. J. H. Ingram,⁴ Payne says: "I am afraid your impression of the book [*New Poems*] is unfavourable. If so I am sorry, as it is my *va-tout*, and if it fails I shall retire for ever from the poetic contest, which has up to the present time brought me nothing but misery and injustice."

Payne, who was a German scholar, must often have

¹ His *Life and Letters*, by Mrs. Ponnell, appeared in 1906.

² This was set to music by Dal Young, and published by Weekes & Co., 14 Hanover Street, Regent Street.

³ Letter of Madox Brown to Payne, 3 March, 1880.

⁴ Editor of Edgar Allan Poe's works.

heard the proverb, "Wasps always attack the best fruit." In his *Autobiography*¹ he quotes the Turkish proverb, "The little curs bark but the caravan passes on." It is a pity these saws did not occur to him at this moment. Don't give in, poet! The failure of *New Poems* was a blow to Payne; a blow far more crushing was in store for him.

Mr. and Mrs. Snee were then living at 37 Fitzroy Road, and the health of Mrs. Snee had for some time been declining.

In the summer of 1879 she took her young children Dorothy and Julian to Pevensy, where she stayed some weeks; but she derived little benefit from the change, and when the new year opened her condition gave her friends additional anxiety. On the 18th of April she expressed a wish to see Payne, and Mr. Snee sent for him. He hastened to the house, but before he could arrive phthisis and exhaustion had done their worst. That wonderful little golden-haired being, which by its beauty, its grace and its mental charm had magnetized poet, painter and scholar, lay dead and cold. And yet in a sense that beauty was really imperishable, stereotyped as it is on the perfect page of genius. She was buried in St. Mary's (Catholic) Cemetery, Kensal Green. A gothic tombstone² of white marble, bearing her name and the dates of her birth and death, commemorates the Beatrice of the 19th century—one of the loveliest and most gifted women of her age.

Mr. Snee felt very deeply the loss of his beautiful and accomplished wife, and he³ took a melancholy pleasure

¹ Page 10.

² The number of the grave is 7823. It is enclosed by small marble piers connected by chains.

³ As Mr. Snee at this point passes out of Payne's life it may be mentioned that he most carefully educated his children Frederick, Dorothy and Julian—Dorothy at the Moravian School, Bedford, and Julian at Buxton College, Forest Gate. His letters (1892–1896) to Dorothy to whom he was passionately attached, have been preserved, and attest to his winsome and self-sacrificial disposition. Frederick died 1 February, 1899, at the age of thirty-one, and was buried at Boscombe. Mr. Snee, after representing Messrs. Bass at Paris for a number of years, was in 1894 pensioned off by the firm. He retired to Chiswick, where he died

in visiting her grave and in seeing that it was kept supplied with flowers and in order.

Payne had been depressed by the ill reception of his poems, but the death of the lady whose delightful personality had inspired so many of them, paralysed all his efforts. He was struck dumb. His Muse was utterly silenced, his hand refused to write. His heart died within him. What we were accustomed to call the "Long Hiatus" ensued. For close upon twenty years he wrote no more original poetry. The effect of this blow is described again and again in *Carol and Cadence*, written twenty-five years after :

In the mid spring,
When heaven and earth,
When land and sea
And all that are within them stir and sing,
For a rapture of new birth,
There fell on me
Inexoriseable calamity:
The love that lit my life from me took wing.

For many a day
The sky was blue
For me in vain ;
'Twixt Spring and Winter, January and May,
Scant difference I knew :
A trance of pain
Life was, o'er which the years' funereal train
Lapsed, like a stream, unnoted, on its way.

There had come upon him

"Life's immedicable woe."

Mrs. Snee had been a lover of roses, really perhaps because they bloom in the month of her birth ; and after her death Payne, as he tells us in *Carol and Cadence*,¹ could never bear their smell.

The inconsolable grief which Dante felt when Beatrice

17 September, 1902, aged sixty-eight. There is a memorial cross to him in the cemetery that adjoins Chiswick old church.

¹ Page 23.



MR. AND MRS. SNEE AND THEIR BABY.

From a photograph by the London & Provincial
Photographic Co.

[To face p. 66.

died is a matter of history, as is also his resolve not to speak or write of her any more till he should be able to say of her that which was never said of woman. A similar resolve took possession of Payne ; and the splendour with which he ultimately enveloped the hapless "Helen"¹ is scarcely less dazzling than that which the earlier poet was enabled to cast round the lady of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia*.

Among those to whom Payne told his grief was his friend De Banville, who on 20 June, 1880, wrote to him as follows :

"I have not ceased to think about you and to suffer for you. Your sorrow is the worst that comes to poor human creatures ; and I know all that your soul, so loving and so tender, must suffer. It remains for you to continue to search for and to find again, the dear absent one, who cannot have entirely left you. But what pain, what grief to see a beloved person suffer so long ! It is in this last that I pity you the most, and I can see how slowly the bitter hours must have passed. But how good of you to remember me in your sorrow ! Write verses if you are able to do so, and as soon as you can do so. Poetry is a sacred vessel into which our tears are happy to fall. Have you heard how misfortune is conspiring against our poor friend Mallarmé ? He has just lost his son and his father-in-law, and at this moment he is suffering from articular rheumatics which prevents him from going to give his lessons and endangers him from earning his living.

"Bouchor is at this moment in London, and I trust that you will meet him. He is a musical fanatic. When they give selections from Wagner at Munich or elsewhere he puts everything else aside and off he rushes. He has left for London so as to be present at some grand concerts."

If Payne, for long, wrote no more original verse, his pen was constantly busy with prose. In the *Nineteenth Century* for September 1880 appeared an article by him on Villon. It is, however, practically the same as the "Pre-

¹ See p. 209.

fatory Note" to his translation of that poet. Among the periodicals that took notice of the article was *Vanity Fair*, in which appeared a comment, which was characterized by Payne, in a letter to Ingram, as an "outrageous piece of spiteful insolence." This, however, was but one of the many shafts which mediocrity was to level at outstanding genius.

The same year there passed through the press a work by Richard C. Christie on Etienne Dolet,¹ the friend of Rabelais. Payne's review of it, a manuscript of 46 quarto pages, which has never been published, is in my possession. In human life the comic always trenches on the tragic. There is a *farceur* at every funeral, a mourner at every feast. At this very time when Payne's heart was sore owing to the death of Mrs. Snee a quarrel occurred between him and Swinburne, and, of all things in the world, on account of their difference of opinion concerning certain ancient English poets! It was one of the articles of Payne's creed that John Marston² stood as a dramatist second and second only to Shakespeare. Now Swinburne had for some time been a furious admirer of Cyril Tourneur, whose *Plays and Poems*, edited by John Churton Collins, had appeared in 1878.³ This work the public had received coldly, and how strongly Swinburne felt on the subject may be judged by a passage in one of his letters⁴ to Collins: "I do think the neglect of that superb genius, when so adequately presented and introduced to the notice of readers, is the grossest instance of general stupidity and torpor in literary taste and scholarship that I ever witnessed."⁵

One day Swinburne went so far as to say that both Webster and Cyril Tourneur were greater than Marston. Now there was fire and brimstone met! Payne defended Marston tooth and nail, and poured all the vitriol of his scorn on Cyril Tourneur, who, he said, had written nothing

¹ Payne's translation of the *Cantique* of Dolet will be found in the *Collected Poems*, vol. ii. p. 382.

² Payne possessed subsequently Marston's works edited by A. H. Bullen, 3 vols., 1887.

³ Dedicated to Swinburne.

⁴ 30 November, 1882.

⁵ *Life of John Churton Collins*, p. 60.

whatever of value beyond a few scattered lines, whereas Marston's plays (the *Dutch Courtesan* being the best) were masterpieces; and as a result of the quarrel the two poets were not on speaking terms for months. Relating the story to me long afterwards Payne said: "Swinburne was very thrawn. You know what that means—contrary. He even put Dobell on a level with Beddoes. All Beddoes' poetry is of the highest flight. Cyril Tournear has an occasional felicitous phrase, that is all." In later years Swinburne used to describe the Dialogue in Beddoes' "Death's Jest Book" as "the howls of madmen trying to out-stun one another."

Perhaps the quarrel was more Swinburne's fault than Payne's, for the incident is paralleled by several other stories of Swinburne, notably his rupture with Churton Collins. But Payne, too, in his younger days, as several incidents recorded in this book bear witness, was also very quick to take offence. When I think of this story I always recall the quarrel between Sterne's father and a brother officer about a goose, but happily the Payne-Swinburne altercation did not lead to a duel, nor were the poets very long estranged.

If, however, Payne and Swinburne differed on the subject of the Elizabethan dramatists they were entirely at one in their admiration of Villon, of several of whose poems Swinburne also made translations. In November 1880 appeared in the columns of the *St. James's Gazette* an attack, by Payne, in Villonian French verse, on Gladstone, who is styled "Cromwell-Bilboquet."¹

¹ It appears in *Collected Poems*, ii. 206. See also *Notes to Collected Poems*, ii. 388. Bilboquet—a toy which consists of a puppet so formed and loaded as always to recover its upright position.

CHAPTER VI

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

1881-1882

EARLY in January O'Shaughnessy, Mr. Malcolm Salaman and some other friends, after dining at the Savage Club, finished the evening at a theatre. On coming out they found themselves in the midst of a violent snowstorm. Not a cab, or any other convenient vehicle was to be had, and they were obliged to drive home on the outside of an omnibus. That terrible night is still recalled by those who weathered it. With O'Shaughnessy inflammation of the lungs set in, and death, it was seen, could be only a matter of days. During that "awful month" Mr. Salaman, Mr. George Moore and Payne went nightly to visit and read to him. Payne has told the story in his pathetic lines "A Christmas Vigil."¹ "Let me but see the light of heaven again!" pleaded the sick man. Payne, with chill fingers, drew the curtains. "All the glass was starred with quaint frost tracery." Then he sat by the bedside and watched his dying friend.

"The gates of death are agape for me," said O'Shaughnessy.

Yet he feared nothing, and he added, as Payne has worded it:

"For, while I hold thy hand, dear friend, I know
Christ's love can still in human bosoms glow
And love will round all troubles into peace,
Although the springs of light and being cease
To cheer us. I may say, with Rabelais,

¹ *Collected Poems*, ii. 23.

As farewell word to living 'Je m'en vais
 Quérir le grand Peut-être.' It is the end.
 I carry into night thy love, O friend,
 'Spite death, 'spite doubt and cold," and spake no more.

It was characteristic of the man to die with words of both Christ and Rabelais on his lips. To Payne it seemed as though a chapter of his own life was closed. He says :

He had been
 My help in autumn's dreary blank of gray,
 In winter's night of doubt my cheer and stay ;
 Together had we trod the path of years,
 Hoped hopes together, feared each other's fears.¹

The first of the Triumvirate had fallen.² A new friend, however, was soon, in a sense, to fill the gap in Payne's life—Mr. Tracy Robinson, of Panama. Mr. Robinson and Payne first met at 20 North Row, Park Lane, and thenceforward Mr. Robinson and his wife Lucy were in constant communication with the poet. As their home was in America, where they had many friends, they hoped to make Payne's name well known there, and, as we shall see, they were able eventually³ to publish in the States a volume of selections from his poems.

Payne also formed a friendship with E. J. W. Gibb, who is remembered on account of his *History of Ottoman Poetry*, and other works.

At this time Payne was devoting the whole of his energies to his great project—the translation of the *Arabian Nights*. He worked with exhausting sedulity, and expended upon it all the gifts in his power. On 5 November, 1881, appeared in the *Athenæum* a paragraph to the effect that the work was ready for the press.

It caught the eye of the distinguished traveller Captain (afterwards Sir) Richard Burton, who had himself many years previous collected notes for a translation of the *Arabian Nights*. In a letter to the *Athenæum*, which

¹ *Collected Poems*, vol. ii. p. 24.

² Mrs. O'Shaughnessy had died in 1879.

³ In 1906.

appeared 26 November, 1881, Burton mentions this fact and proceeds: "the *Arabian Nights* is a marvellous picture of oriental life; its shiftings are those of the kaleidoscope. Its alternation of pathos and bathos—of the boldest poetry with the baldest prose, and finally, its contrast of the highest and purest morality with the orgies of Apuleius and Petronius Arbiter, take away the reader's breath. I determined to render every word with the literalism of Urquhart's *Rabelais*. But . . . my work is still unfinished. I rejoice, therefore, to see that Mr. Payne has addressed himself to a realistic translation without 'abridgments or suppressions.' I have only to wish him success. . . . I want to see that the book has fair-play; and if it is not treated as it deserves I shall still have to print my own version. *Villon*, however, makes me hope for the best."

In this letter Burton speaks of his own work as "still unfinished." This was quite true, seeing that it was not even begun, unless two or three pages which he once showed to Mr. Watts-Dunton, and the pigeon-holing of notes be regarded as a commencement.

Payne, supposing from this letter that Burton had made considerable progress with his translation, wrote, on 28 November, to Burton, and using the words *Tantus labor non sit cassus*, suggested collaboration. Burton replied cordially, on 17 December, 1881,¹ and said: "In April at the latest I hope to have the pleasure of shaking hands with you in London, and then we will talk over the *1,000 Nights and a Night*. . . . I am an immense admirer of your *Villon*."

Writing to Burton early in the year Payne observed that as his first volume was in type, apparently it should at once go to press, but that he would be pleased to submit subsequent volumes to Burton.

In May 1882 Burton called on Payne,² and it then transpired that Burton's project was still entirely *in nubibus*. He admitted that he had no manuscript of any kind beyond "a sheet or two of notes," and it was

¹ *Burton Letters to Payne*, No. 1.

² Visit referred to in *Burton's Letters to Payne*, Nos. 3 and 4.

afterwards gathered from his words that these notes were a mere syllabus of the contents of the Boulac edition of the *Nights*—the only one of the four printed texts (Calcutta, Macnaughton, Boulac and Breslau) used and combined by Payne with which Burton was then acquainted. Incredible as the fact just stated may appear, it is certainly true as Burton's own letters prove.¹ The whole project of collaboration then, naturally, fell through. Payne's first volume duly appeared, and as the result of further conversations it was arranged that Burton should read Payne's subsequent proofs, though he declined to accept remuneration unless it should turn out that his assistance was necessary. The issue of Payne's volume had two immediate results. The first is referred to in the letter of Burton to Payne of 3 June, 1882,² in which he says : "Please send me a lot of advertisements. I can place a number of copies. Mrs. Grundy is beginning to roar, already I hear the bore³ of her. And I know her to be an arrant whore and tell her so and don't care a damn for her."

The second was that the proprietors of E. W. Lane's miserable and emasculated translation of the *Nights* announced the issue of a new edition of that work.

By this time had been formed the Kama Shastra Society,⁴ the object of which was the publication of certain Hindoo erotic works—the leading members being Burton and F. F. Arbuthnot, and it is referred to in a letter written from Trieste, 5 August, 1882,⁵ by Burton to Payne.

Although Payne had no connection with the Kama Shastra Society, it was owing to its formation that he obtained a new friend, F. F. Arbuthnot. Payne described Arbuthnot to me as "A queer, brusque Scotchman, one of the best men I knew. He was generally called 'Bunny,' and the name suited well his gentle, kindly disposition ;

¹ I have had the whole of this correspondence in my hands, and I still have copies of all the letters.

² *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 5, written from the Athenæum Club.

³ The sudden rise of the tide in a river or estuary.

⁴ See also my *Life of Sir Richard Burton*, ii., pp. 57, 87.

⁵ *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 6.

but he was little interested in literature and art, which are my second nature." He had beautiful clear blue eyes, and as in photography blue becomes white, they have, in his portraits, an uncanny, washed-out appearance.

In a marginal note pencilled in the MS. of my life of *Burton*, Payne observes of Arbuthnot: "Though I simply loathed the line of literature [oriental pornographic] which occupied most of his thoughts, he consulted me as to every particular of his publications. His Radicalism was entirely superficial, a matter of social connection and position. We never quarrelled over it. He was *good* enough for a Tory."

Of the works proposed to be issued by the Kama Shashtra Society (and almost all the expense fell on Arbuthnot) only the following were printed:—*Kama Sutra*, by Vatsyayana, 1883; *Ananga Ranga*, by Kullianmull, 1885; Burton's *Arabian Nights*, 1885-1886; *The Scented Garden* (Burton used to refer to this as "my old version"); *The Beharistan*, by Jami, 1887; *The Gulistan*, by Sadi, 1888. A few other works, including the *Nigaristan*, by Jawini, are still in MS. All of them, with the exception of the *Nights* and *The Scented Garden*, were, I believe, translated by Edward Rehatsek.

Understanding that an attack was to be made in the Press on Payne's work, Burton wrote (29 September, 1882)¹: "Your book has no end of enemies and I can stir up a small wasp's nest without once appearing in the matter. The best answer will be showing up a few of Lane's mistakes." With the letter Burton enclosed three sonnets (specimens of his translation of Camoens), and he asked for Payne's opinion on them. Burton would have delighted in a battle royal with the Laneites, but the Villon Society, considering the tactics that were being employed against them, had no wish to draw the attention of the authorities to the moral question. Indeed, of the possible action of the authorities as instigated by the opposing clique the Society stood in some fear.

¹ *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 9.

In a letter of 8 October, 1882,¹ written from Trieste, Burton, after observing that in his own case he "should encourage a row" with the enemy, says he quite understands Payne's reason for the opposite course. He goes on: "Meanwhile you must get a list of Lane's *lâches*. I regret to say my copy of his *Modern Egyptians* has been lost or stolen, and with it are gone the lists of his errata I had drawn up many years ago. Of course I don't know Arabic! but who does? One may know a part of it—a corner of the field, but all! Bah! Many thanks for notes on the three sonnets. The remarks are those of a scholar and a translator."

The first proofs of Vol. 2 were read by Burton in October 1882. Writing to Payne on 21 October² he said: "You have done your work very well, and my part is confined to a very small amount of scribble which you will rub out at discretion." With the letter he sent more of Camoens for Payne's criticism. On 29 October, 1882,³ writing from Trieste, Burton said: "The more I read your translation the more I like it. You have no need to fear the Poole clique; that is to say, you can give them as good as they can give you. I am quite ready to justify the 'moral' point. Of course we must not attack Lane till he is made the *cheval de bataille*, against us. But peace and quiet are not in my way, and if they want a fight they can have it."

As regards the suggestion of collaboration Burton eventually declared that Payne required no assistance of any kind; and therefore he refused to accept remuneration for reading the proofs. Naturally they differed, as Arabists all do, upon certain points, but on all subjects save two Burton allowed that Payne's opinion was as good as his own.

The first concerned the jingles in the prose portions of the *Nights*. Burton wanted them to be preserved, but Payne could not consent, and he gives his reasons in his Terminal Essay. The second exception was the

¹ Burton's *Letters to Payne*, No. 11.

² Burton's *Letters to Payne*, No. 12.

³ Burton's *Letters to Payne*, No. 13.

treatment of revolting passages. "If anything is in any redaction of the original," said Burton, "in it should go." . . . If he sinned, he added, he sinned in good company—"in the company of the authors of the Authorized Version of the Bible, who did not hesitate to render *literatim* passages of a similar nature." Payne, on the other hand, was inclined to minimise these passages as much as possible. Though determined that his translation should be a complete one, yet he entirely omitted coarsenesses whenever he could find excuse to do so—that is, when they did not appear in all the texts. If no excuse existed, he clothed the idea in skilful language. Nothing is omitted; but it is, of course, within the resources of literary art to say anything without real offence. Burton, who had no aptitude for the task, who, moreover, had other aims, constantly disagreed with Payne upon this point.

Curiously enough, all the translation of the *Nights* was done on the top of buses. Payne loved to "segregate himself in a crowd." Those were the days of horse buses, and passengers by them anywhere in London must often have looked on with perplexity at the foreign-looking, near-sighted man—oblivious of the movement and roar around him—raising now an Arabic manuscript, and now a sheaf of flimsy foolscap, to his eyes. They would have been still more perplexed had they known that he had boarded the bus without troubling where it was going, that he went wherever it chose to carry him, and that he got off only when it refused, point blank, to carry him an inch further. The fascinating pages of the *Arabian Nights* are the sequel to these nondescript journeys.

In a letter of 23 December, 1882,¹ Burton congratulates Payne "upon the subscription list being so soon filled up." "Is it not time," he asks, "to think of a reprint"? Then there is further reference to the Kama Shashtra Society. "The idea," says Burton, "is Rabelaisism—I hope you will enjoy it."

But Payne (as already stated) did not enjoy it. He

¹ *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 14.

took no interest in it whatever. He once said to me :
“These works have no literary qualities. I would not waste my time by giving a thought to them.”

In reply to Burton's suggestion that there should be another edition Payne said that he had pledged himself not to reissue it in an unexpurgated form.

CHAPTER VII

TALES FROM THE ARABIC

1883-12 September, 1885

IN Burton's next letter to Payne, 15 January, 1883,¹ there is more about the Kama Shashtra Society. He seems to have forgotten that he had previously mentioned it, for he says of Arbuthnot: "He and I and the Printer have started a Hindu Kama Shashtra (Ars Amoris) Society. It will make the British Public stare. Please encourage him."

On 23 January, 1883, he writes (with his tongue in his cheek) respecting his copy of Payne's *Villon*: "Almost ashamed to keep *Villon*—private copy. Mrs. B[urton] easily appeased. It is a queer fish; the more I know him, the less I know of him."

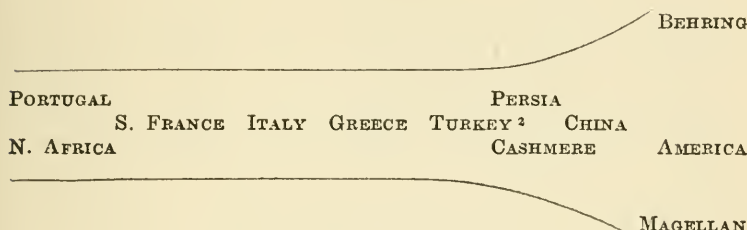
On 12 May, when returning portions of Payne's proofs of the *Nights*, he says²: "You are 'drawing it very mild.' Has there been any unpleasantness about plain speaking? Poor Abu Hasan is (as it were) castrated. I should say 'Be hold' (*Audace*, etc.) only you know better than I how far you can go and cannot go. I should simply translate every word."

On 22 May he touches again on certain subjects, the manner of the dealing with which marks one of the great differences between his own and Payne's translation. He says: "Unfortunately it is these offences against nature (which come so naturally in Greece and Persia, and which belong strictly to their fervid age) that give the book

¹ *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 16.

² *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 18.

so much of its ethnological value." He then refers to a paper which he had written, showing the geographical limits of these offences, and he makes a diagram of trumpet shape—"a broad band across Europe and Asia, widening out into China and embracing all [aboriginal¹] America."



"Curious, is it not? Beyond the limits the practice is purely sporadic, within them endemic. I shall publish it some day and surprise the world.

"I don't live in England and I don't care a damn for public opinion. I would rather tread on Mrs. Grundy's pet corn than not. She may howl on her * * * * * to her heart's content."

In his letter³ to Payne⁴ of 1 October, 1883, Burton again puts in a plea for literalism. He says: "What I meant by literalism is literally translating each noun (in the long lists which so often occur) in its turn, so that the student can use the translation. I hold the *Nights* the best of class books, and when a man knows it he can get on with Arabs everywhere." Payne, however, had an entirely different object in view. His desire was to produce a classic, and he succeeded.

¹ I cannot read this word, but evidently it is a word of some such meaning as aboriginal.

² It will be understood that by Turkey Burton also meant Bulgaria and other states then under Turkish control. The reader may care to compare Burton's remarks in this letter with Payne's reference to the Bulgarians in his savage sonnet "Turk and Slav."

³ *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 21.

⁴ Payne had just returned from a tour in Holland.

Early in 1884 the ninth and last volume of Payne's *Arabian Nights* was in the hands of his subscribers. The price of the work was nine guineas. Imagining that the demand for so expensive a work would not be large, Payne limited himself to the publication of only 500 copies. The demand exceeded 2,000, so 1,500 persons were disappointed.

Burton being, as always, purse-pinched, felt deeply for these 1,500 disappointed subscribers, who were holding out their nine-guinea cheques, with nobody to take the money. Oh, what a calamity!

"Do you object to my making an entirely new translation?" he asked.

To which, of course, Payne replied that he could have no objection whatever. So Burton then set to work, hot-hand. In a letter to Payne of 20 June, 1884,¹ he said: "The more I examine your translation the more I like it," and on 12 August, 1884,² he gave an idea of his own plan. He said: "I am going in for notes where they did not suit your scheme, and shall make the book a perfect *répertoire* of Eastern knowledge in its most esoteric form."

Although, as we have seen, Burton's service to Payne's translation was but trifling, Burton was to Payne in another way a tower of strength. Professional spite, jealousy, and other causes had ranged against his *Nights* quite an army of men of more or less weight, including the group who for various reasons made it their business to cry up the wooden and common-place translation of E. W. Lane. Burton, who had for long been spoiling for a fight, fell upon the Lancites like Samson upon the Philistines. He smote them hip and thigh, he gloried in the tumult, he wallowed in blood. But though the battle was hot while it lasted it was soon over, and the cowed Lancites subsided into silence.

In March 1884 Payne was residing at 5 Lansdowne Place, Brunswick Square, and on the 23rd of that month De Banville wrote to him as follows: "I am delighted

¹ *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 28.

² *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 29.

at the success of your *Nights*. Vitu is going to publish a very curious volume which he will send you. It is the fruit of many years' work: his study of the jargon of Villon. I congratulate you, my dear friend, on your dauntless courage. I can see that you are going to carry out successfully a prodigious undertaking and to proffer to your countrymen a priceless gift."

The letters of Hawkins-Payne to his son Harry, who in June 1884 went up to London to study the law under the aegis of John, with whom he resided at 5 Lansdowne Place, give interesting glimpses both of the old folks at the lone Shrubhill House, and the two brothers in seething London.

On 17 June, Hawkins-Payne is not surprised that the New Law Courts puzzle Harry. It is difficult to know one's way about them. Then follows a passage which shows that the father had already heard of his eldest son's growing fame. He says: "I 'spose John is quite aware of the notice of the 'Villon Society's' *Arabian Nights* in the *Bath Herald's* London letter of 14th inst."

In the next letter (19 June, 1884) is a charming touch—the old, old story of the boys away from home not satisfying the old folks' insatiable appetite for letters. "Don't leave us without a line or two at least once a week. You see we really do feel some interest in your goings on, and neither John nor Willy ever thinks us old ones at home worth a line—except under compulsion." After John's name is a cross in pencil, and below, also in pencil, and in the handwriting of the mother—always ready to thrust her gentle figure as a barrier between John and his father—"That's a mistake, B.P."

Fan (Frances) works for Harry a pair of slippers, and Hawkins-Payne on 21 June (it is his birthday, and he is 71) sends a bath (being surprised that John did not provide one). "Then wash and be clean," is the admonition, "only use no *hot* water for a while lest it blister off the freshly enamelled surface. Mum doesn't think you will find once a week too great a strain on your filial pen." On 7 July all John's brothers and sisters were in London. "Only think," writes the father, "of all

six of you being in town at once." On 18 July, he writes (though he is troubled with rheumatism): "Glad to hear that you are now really sticking to business and are getting on comfortably with your brother, all of which tends, you may be sure, to make the old folks happier than the condition of health of one of us at least would have led us to hope for." The letter of 11 August, 1884, indicates whence John got his vein of humour. "Dear Mum, in telling a wasp a bit of her mind on Friday, squashed a pane of glass as well as the stinger and cut her hand rather badly—the right hand, too, which was not altogether judicious." From the next letter we learn that John was away for a holiday, and Harry is commiserated: "Poor lonely one left to pine on the stem! (for stem read office-stool)." But in a fortnight he, too, was free.

Hawkins-Payne died on 2 November, 1884.

This same year Payne issued new editions of three of his works—*The Masque of Shadows*, *Songs of Life and Death*, and *New Poems*.

In the Breslau Text of the *Nights* and in the Calcutta fragment of 1814 are a number of stories that do not rightly belong to the series of the *Nights* proper; but most of them are popular tales, and Payne, having finished his earlier task, now set himself to translate them also. They were eventually published in three volumes in 1884 with the title of *Tales from the Arabic*.

Many parts of the original texts, especially the Breslau, are hopelessly corrupt, and would have daunted a less indomitable translator than Payne. They required, indeed, in Burton's words, a diviner rather than a translator, and in Payne they found one. Perhaps the best known of these stories are "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and "Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Peri Banu." The remarks already made on the various merits of Payne's translation and Burton's translation of the *Nights* apply also to *Tales from the Arabic*, which Burton issued with the title of *Supplemental Nights*.

Among the stories included in Galland's *Arabian Nights* were "Alaeddin or the Wonderful Lamp" and

"Zein ul Asnam," but Payne had not included them in his *Tales from the Arabic* because no Arabic original could be found. Indeed, many persons regarded them as Galland's own composition. Just after, however, the appearance of Payne's *Tales from the Arabic*, M. Zotenberg of Paris discovered a MS. copy of the *Nights* containing the Arabic originals of both, and Payne, thanks to the courtesy of Zotenberg, was able to make use of it. He published his translation of the two tales in 1885 with the title of *Alaeddin or the Wonderful Lamp; Zein ul Asnam and the King of the Genii*.

Among those who perused with delight Payne's volume was M. Zotenberg himself, who in a letter to Payne says: "Now I have read it through, and understand its value. I don't want to offer you a commonplace compliment, but I must be permitted to observe that it is not enough to sum you up as a poet and a stylist, for this work reveals also the profound scholar and the erudite Arabist."

Of the success of Payne's *Villon* we have already spoken. In the meantime Mr. Granger Hutt had died and Mr. Alfred Forman took his place as secretary of the Villon Society. In subsequent prospectuses the name of Mr. Wheatley was also omitted; and Mr. Forman occupied the post of secretary during the rest of Payne's life.

In 1885 Payne, Max Eberstadt, Mrs. Lewis and others visited Germany, and among other places Heidelberg and Bayreuth, where they met Wagner, with whom Mrs. Lewis had previously been on terms of friendship.

Having finished the *Nights* and the supplementary volumes Payne commenced a translation of the *Decameron*, but in accordance with his custom he kept the matter a secret till his work was in the press.

From May 1885 to February 1886 Burton was again in England, and he and Payne often met. "I think," said Burton, on one occasion, "when I have finished the *Nights* I shall translate Boccaccio."

"My dear boy," said Payne, "I've already done him, and my book is in the press."

"You are taking the bread out of my mouth," commented Burton, plaintively.

"But," continued Payne, "there is another work that I thought of doing—the *Pentameron* of Basile, and if you care to take my place I will not only stand aside, but lend you the materials collected for the purpose."

Burton, who was not aware of the existence of the *Pentameron*¹ until Payne told him, welcomed the idea, and in due course commenced and finished the translation,² but Payne insisted that Burton's work "is a poor, crude, lifeless performance," and he resolved, though he was unable to carry out his intention, to make a translation of it himself after all.³

Burton's translation of the *Nights* left the press 12 September, 1885. In the Foreword to this work and elsewhere Burton paid many compliments to Payne's translation, but he did not go far enough, for, as Payne was in time to discover, and as any reader can judge for himself by comparing the two translations, Burton's version was in the early portion largely a paraphrase of Payne's, and in the latter simply Payne's altered and spoilt. Consequently Burton was able to get done in two very broken years, and with several other books in hand, work that had occupied Payne six years without cessation (1876–1882). In my *Life of Sir Richard Burton*, I have given a number of parallel passages in order to show to what an enormous extent Burton drew upon Payne. I might, however, have made my case far stronger, for as Burton's translation proceeded he became so indolent that he copied whole pages from Payne—merely altering one or two words.

To sum up: (1) Burton's translation is largely a paraphrase of Payne's. He takes thousands of sentences from Payne, often without altering a single word.

(2) Where there are differences Payne's version is invariably the clearer, finer and more stately of the two.

(3) Payne's translation of the poetry in the *Nights*,

¹ Payne told me this at our first interview.

² It appeared in 2 vols. in 1893.

³ Payne announced this translation at the end of the *Hafiz*, 1901.

with its musical subtleties and choice phrases, such as "The thought of God to him his very housemate is," is a delight to the ear and an enchantment of the sense. Burton's verse is mere doggerel. To give only one instance, how bewitchingly Payne translates that metrical outburst in Vol. 1, respecting the slender and dazzlingly beautiful young lady who was carried in a coffer of glass :

She shines out in the dusk, and lo ! the day is here,
And all the trees flower forth with blossoms bright and clear,
The sun from out her brows arises, and the moon,
When she unveils her face, doth hide for shame and fear.

The following is Burton's precious rendering :

She rose like the morn as she shone through the night,
And she gilded the grove with her gracious sight :
From her radiance the sun taketh increase, when
She unweileth and shameth the moonshine bright.

But comparison of any other passages would reveal just as well Burton's fatuity¹ and Payne's splendour.

(4) Burton spoils his version by the introduction of ugly or uncouth words and phrases drawn from old writers, such as "swevens" (dreams) and "gar me drce." Moreover his translation was done in a tremendous hurry. Payne often said that Burton used words incorrectly, instancing for example Burton's employment of the word "purfled" as a synonym for "embroidered," and contended that he could furnish scores of examples of Burton's inaccurate use of archaic words. Indeed Burton, a magnificent man of action, had, in Payne's opinion, scarcely any merits as a writer. Finer, more sparkling, more correct English than Payne's no man has ever written.

Burton's edition had one great speciality—his notes, which are largely pornographic, and it is for these notes and these notes alone that the student will turn to Burton's volumes. In Burton's own words, "Payne's admirable

¹ As a writer of verse, of course.

version appeals to the orientalist and the stylist, mine to the anthropologist and student of Eastern manners and customs."

By scholars, Payne's *Arabian Nights* was everywhere received with acclamation; and its merits were ultimately recognized by the Press, the most appreciative notice being that in the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1886.

At a bound Payne had placed himself in the front rank of English translators. His name will go down to posterity along with the honoured names of North, Adlington and the other splendid Elizabethans.

That being the case, his remarks on translation generally are peculiarly valuable. "From my own experience," he says, "I cannot recommend to a young man wishing to form for himself 'a forcible and interesting style of expression' (in so far, that is, as it is possible to acquire such a gift) a better course than the intimate study and analysis of and translation from other languages than his own. This he will find will not only enlarge his vocabulary beyond belief, but will familiarize him with many and various ways of expressing familiar ideas; and this gives him command of the most urgent requisites of style—the avoidance of repetition and the power or means of expressing the eternal commonplaces which form the basis of literature and life in a new and, therefore, a striking manner."

The marginal notes pencilled by Payne in the manuscript of my life of Burton are very numerous and illuminative. The following are a few:

In chapter 29 (Vol. 2) I said in a passage, afterwards omitted, that Burton's doctrine "is that everything should be studied, everything should be talked about," etc. Payne comments: "Technical knowledge of evil things in the proper place and for the proper purposes is a very different thing from the general rubbing of noses in the sewage of depravity as Burton proposes."

By the side of a passage in which I speak of Payne's own style he pencilled: "My antique style is the result of assimilation not imitation, arrived at from the inside not the outside. The Authorized Version I feel has had

more influence on my prose style than any other book, and I have so loved and studied it from boyhood that I have assimilated its processes and learned the secrets of the interior mechanism of its style. Dante also, whose *Divina Commedia* is one of the four books (the others being the Bible, Shakespeare and Heine's Poems with which I am supersaturated) has also had an immense influence on my style, both in prose and verse."

In the place where I quote Burton as saying that his scheme was "to translate literally each noun (in the long lists which so often occur) in its turn, so that the student can use the translation," Payne underscored the eight concluding words and pencilled in the margin: "This formed no part of my scheme, in fact was directly opposed to the spirit of my work, which was to make the translation, whilst quite sufficiently faithful to the original, a monument of noble English prose and verse."

In Vol. 2, page 14, I put in parallel columns Payne's and Burton's translations of the poem in the *Nights* which commences "Renouncement, lowliness, the faker's garments be" (Payne v. 51, Burton v. 294). Payne pencilled: "This piece is characteristic of the difference between the two translations. Burton says of it "It is sad doggerel," and so it is in his version; but I signal it as one of the finest pieces of verse in the *Nights*. As a piece of devotional poetry I think it worthy of Vaughan or Christina Rossetti."

Opposite my remarks on Burton's religion Payne wrote: "If anything he was a Mohammedan, Islam being the only practical moral and ethical religion. Ideal religions, such as that of the Vedanta, were beyond his scope; he was like the Jews and had no ideality in his composition."

Once, in conversation with Payne, I said to him: "Your *Nights* stirred up a rare nest of hornets."

"Yes," he said, "and to give you an idea of their unscrupulousness one of them—Professor Robertson Smith²—

¹ See my *Life of Burton*, Vol. 2, p. 117.

² Burton's comment was, "Men who have been persecuted often in their turn become persecutors."

put it about that my translation was made not direct from the Arabic but from German translations—an amazing display of ignorance, seeing that there were no German translations with the exception of the wearisome garbled and incomplete version of Dr. Weil.”

T. W. How did you deal with him?

P. I sent him the following words from the *Nights*, written in the Arabic character: “I and thou and the slanderer, there shall be for us an awful day and a place of standing up to judgment.” After this he sheathed his sword, and the Villon Society heard no more of him.

Payne was, indeed, a terrible fighter. For every particular adversary he had a peculiar weapon. I remember that he referred to another who attacked him as “a sour pedant.”

In Vol. 2, p. 137, opposite my reference to the Sindbad story, Payne wrote: “Important to show this. Burton allowed that in all other respects my translation was thoroughly literal, but I could never get him to understand my objection to filth for filth’s sake, altogether apart from all question of prudery. He himself had ‘a romantic passion’ for it. Burton’s erudition, though immense as a matter of mere bulk, was, I am afraid, largely pinchbeck, it altogether lacked exactitude.

“Burton seemed to me to have, like Holofernes, been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps. So in every branch where I was qualified to judge. He was a man of action, not of thought or study in the true sense.”

It appears that about this time Ruskin showed himself hostile to Payne’s Translation of the *Nights*, for Burton in a letter of 15 January, 1886, wrote: “One line to say how much I am disgusted with the way in which Ruskin depreciated your translation. . . . However, I suppose you will take no notice of it.”

In February 1886 Burton was made a K.C.M.G.

CHAPTER VIII

BOCCACCIO

12 September, 1885-1886

As we have seen, Payne had for some time been engaged upon a translation of the *Decameron*. Boccaccio's masterpiece had often before been Englished, but all previous renderings were absurdly inadequate, most, indeed, being mere paraphrases of the loosest and most incorrect description, while the best of them are full of errors and misrepresentations. Some of the stories, indeed, are practically unintelligible as they appear in the renderings of the old translators, who, as Payne amusingly observes, "with touching unanimity concur in missing the points upon which they turn," and the same remark applies to many other passages in the work which had never been correctly rendered until the appearance of Payne's monumental translation. The truth is, all previous translators were either smatterers or mere scholars. The *Decameron* abounds in obscure, incoherent and confused passages. The smatterers deftly jumped over them, the dryasdusts, who brought to the task only their own arid brains, translated them wrongly. Mere scholarship, indeed, unaided by imagination and the literary faculty, can make nothing whatever of the *Decameron*; especially as the Italian commentators "almost entirely confined themselves to the elaborate explanation of perfectly obvious passages whilst altogether neglecting those which present any real difficulty." Only a poet, man of genius and scholar combined, could do justice to Boccaccio; and such a man came forward in Payne.

His work was published in three volumes in 1886.

An expurgated and illustrated edition which appeared in 1893 is preceded by an outline of Boccaccio's life written by Payne. This "outline" is really Part 1 of a manuscript article entitled "Giovanni Boccaccio" which was placed in my hands by Payne.

Part 2¹ is, however, far more interesting, containing as it does Payne's estimate of the *Decameron* itself. "Of the literary qualities of the work," he says, "it would be difficult to speak too highly. When dealing with a 'merry geste' or an amorous adventure, Boccaccio's touch is as light as Voltaire's own, whilst in tragic and sentimental passages his treatment leaves nothing to be desired in the matter of dignity, pathos and poignancy. . . . His satire, whilst not devoid of the necessary mordancy and severity when he exposes the greed, sensuality and hypocrisy of the unworthy priests and monks and the corruption and malignity of the courtiers and sycophants of his day, is yet never suffered to degenerate into grossness or malice, nor does he ever overpass the limits of legitimate self-defence. In narrative and description of natural beauty, in their every variety, he is equally at home; witness the magnificent introductory recital of the terrors of the Plague at Florence, with its tragic note of 'alto pianto' and the exquisite smiling pictures of the Garden (Introduction to Day III) and of the Ladies' Valley (Conclusion to Day VI). But it is perhaps in pathos that he most unreservedly excels; in such passages as the death of Ghismunda² and the piteous stories of the hapless loves of Lisabetta and Lorenzo,³ Andrevuola and Gabriotto,⁴ Simona and Pasquino,⁵ Salvestra and Girolamo⁶ he is unsurpassable; whilst even his great master and exemplar, Dante, could hardly have added to 'the terror of the tale' in the overpowering tragedy of the Spectral Chase⁷ enacted before the horror-stricken eyes of Nastagio delgi Onesti.

¹ Which is still unpublished.

² Payne, ii. 52, Tancred, Prince of Salerno.

³ Payne, ii. 95, Lisabetta's brothers slay her lover.

⁴ Payne, ii. 102, Andrevuola loveth Gabriotto.

⁵ Payne, ii. 112, Simona loveth Pasquino.

⁶ Payne, ii. 118, Girolamo loveth Salvestra.

⁷ Payne, ii. 214, Nastagio delgi Onesti.

The Burtons were in England again in June 1886, and remained here until January 1887. During that time Payne and Burton were much in each other's company. Burton was to take tea with Payne just before leaving, but on 10 January, 1887,¹ he writes to Payne: "That last cup of tea came to grief, I ran away from London abruptly feeling a hippishness gradually creep over my brain; longing to see a sight of the sun and so forth."

On 13 January Sir Richard was in Paris, where he met Zotenberg, and thence he made for his home at Trieste.

¹ *Letters of Burton to Payne*, No. 34.

CHAPTER IX

*BANDELLO AND OMAR KHEYYAM*¹

1887-1898

HAVING finished the *Decameron*, Payne set himself the task of translating the novels of Matteo Bandello, Bishop of Agen (1554-1573)—“the *Thousand and one Nights* of the Renaissance.” Apart from their intrinsic merit these novels have appealed to Englishmen because from Bandello’s picturesque pages the Elizabethan dramatists drew the stories on which they founded some of their most remarkable plays. Shakespeare is indebted to him for the plots of “*Romeo and Juliet*,” “*Much Ado about Nothing*,” and “*Twelfth Night*.” Massenger’s “*Picture*,” Webster’s “*Duchess of Malfi*,” and Fletcher’s “*Triumph of Death*,” and “*Maid of the Mill*,” are all founded upon Bandello’s novels.

Payne’s work, which ranks among the finest of his translations, appeared in 1890 in six volumes. Of Payne’s style in this delightful series, Mr. John Kettelwell² says: “At the will of the Wizard our senses skip even as ‘Orpheus with his lute made trees.’ In and out the beautiful words scurry, like eddies in a river, and the archaisms are the interesting things the river carries, boughs of trees, whips of hay, sprays of forgotten flowers.” Especially Mr. Kettelwell praises Payne’s flexibility: “The short sentences and monosyllables for action, the enamelled phrases, long drawn out, for beauty; the twisted verb,

¹ To use Payno’s spelling. FitzGerald spells it Khayyam.

² Paper read at the 14th Annual Meeting of the John Payne Society, 27 April, 1918.

the dexterously misplaced adverb. Above all the style is direct."

In 1887 Payne's mother and her daughters Nora and Frances left Shrubhill House, Box, and settled at 104 Holland Road, London. Mrs. Pritchard resided, as we noticed, at Queen's Gate. John, who was already something of an epicure, was very fond of Stilton cheese, and most particular as to the flavour. One evening he grumbled at the cheese given him by Mrs. Pritchard. On the following Saturday he dined at 104 Holland Road, where he also had Stilton cheese, which he pronounced "perfect" adding, "Now why cannot Annie have cheese like that?" A burst of laughter revealed to him that he had been trapped. The slice, indeed, had been cut from the very cheese that he had so heartily abused at Queen's Gate.

Miss Rose Fisher had become the wife of Lieutenant (afterwards General) Mackay Heriot, and their little boy Oscar was a favourite with Payne. One day the two families spent an afternoon at the Zoo. The monkey house, as usual, proved the principal attraction, and Oscar's eyes beamed with delight when he saw a marmozet. "Oh, do look at that dear little monkey!" he said, "Isn't it just like my Uncle John!" The party was convulsed with laughter, none being more amused than Payne himself. Another little boy who got into Payne's good graces was John E. Spencer Brind, now Lieutenant-Colonel Brind, D.S.O. Payne took him to the Botanical Gardens, and when the boy got home he said, "Nobody has such a garden as Uncle John. My Uncle's garden is delightful. It is full of ponds, bridges, trees and flowers."

Another little boy of whom he made a great pet, Payne took out into the fields to gather harebells and other flowers. On one of these occasions while Payne sat reading a book, the child, a mere baby, came up to him with large tears in his eyes, saying, "Tant make e blue-bells 'ing." Even John Payne, poet as he was, failed just then to get a peal out of them, but subsequently in poem after poem the harebell figures, and was made to give out its music.

Payne had at this time two black cats—Day and Martin. He taught one to open his bedroom door, and it used to bring his slippers downstairs, carrying one at a time in its mouth. He did not care for dogs. If a dog behaved well and anybody praised it, he always insisted that it had a cat inside, or that it had a cat for its mother. "The cat," he once said to me, "is the poet's animal."

He was an absolute genius in his appreciation of children, and seemed to understand everything they wanted without words. It was his habit when he kissed them to put both his hands under their chin and raise the little face towards him, and he used his hands in the same way when he kissed his sisters.

He was fond of proverbs and proverbial sayings,¹ especially those of Arabic origin—"Man's resolution uprooteth mountains" being one of them. Homely proverbs he often gave in their Latin form as "Ne sutor ultra crepidam" (Let the cobbler stick to his last).

Already Payne had become very much of a recluse. He was a limpet and would not leave his rock. There are two principal ways of keeping up the activity of the mind—first by work, second by contact with one's fellowmen. Nobody could have worked harder than Payne, but from his fellowmen he every year more and more withdrew himself, till at last he saw scarcely anyone outside his own family except the Hutts,² the Heriots, and the Nixes.³ Miss Hutt had artistic gifts and she designed the covers for several of his works.

As we noticed on an early page he was superstitious.⁴ He declared that the Easterns had learnt a great deal from nature. He still could not bear to hear people speak slightly of table-turning. He regarded dreams as warnings. He took great notice of women's dress. If,

¹ See also pp. 106, 173.

² See p. 113.

³ See p. 159.

⁴ See p. 15, and *Vigil and Vision*, p. 102.

as he often did, he took Dr. Nix's family to the Promenade concerts at Covent Garden or elsewhere it was not before carefully criticizing their attire. "We all," said Miss Nix, "had to promenade before him." Queen Victoria was among the admirers of his poetry. Against her taste in literature he therefore had nothing to say, but he often lamented her taste in hats and gowns. He sadly wanted to give her a few hints. If only she had paraded before him along with the Nix girls! But it was not to be.

He liked a woman to be womanly. He said "Women as men are ridiculous, but women as women are delicious. Give me a feminine woman! The clergy—the third sex as he called them—were not favourites with him. He liked to see dancing, and he often went to the ballets at the Alhambra and His Majesty's. A ballet called "Excelsior" at the latter particularly pleased him, and he could never sufficiently praise the dancing of Madame Genée. He liked to frequent the long bar at the Criterion "in order to watch life," and he would make remarks in a low tone to his friends respecting the carriage and conduct of its habitués.

His shortsightedness caused all sorts of amusement to his young friends when they called on him. When he poured out the tea there were liquids "floating all over the place." His friends were fortunate if they did not get tea and coffee mixed.

With Swinburne Payne was again on excellent terms. Shortly after the publication of the *Bandello*, Swinburne wrote to Payne and asked: "When are we going to have some more of your inimitable poetry?" Among the admirers of Payne's work both in prose and in verse was also W. E. H. Lecky, the historian, who joined with the Robinsons in their endeavour to make Payne known in America.

On 14 March, 1888,¹ Sir Richard Burton wrote to Payne offering to lend him (if he could find it in his library, and ultimately he did find it) his copy of Zotenberg's MS. of *Zein ul Asnam*. He says: "Delighted to hear

¹ *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 35.

that in spite of [writer's] cramp Vol. 5 *Bandello* is finished."

In July 1888 Sir Richard Burton¹ was again in England, and he and Payne saw much of each other both at Payne's own house and at the homes of their friends Mr. F. F. Arbuthnot and Mr. H. S. Ashbee.²

With Lady Burton Payne got on tolerably, though he did not like her. She was proud of her skill in Eastern cookery, especially in the preparation of the North African dish of *kuskus*³ or *cous coussou*, a sort of frumenty of millet, etc., and she used to hold it out as an inducement to Payne to visit her and her husband that she would make him a dish of this delicacy.⁴

Mr. H. S. Ashbee, who lived at 53 (the big corner house) Bedford Square, was a curious matter-of-fact, stoutish, stolid, affable man, with a Maupassantian taste for low life, its humours and its laxities. Of art and literature he had absolutely no idea; but he was an enthusiastic bibliophile, and his library, which included a unique collection of rare and curious books, had been built up at enormous expense. Somebody having described him as "not a bad old chappie," Payne added characteristically, "and he has a favourite cat, which says something for him."⁵ Burton, Payne, Arbuthnot, and Ashbee, as we said, often met. The serenity of these gatherings was never ruffled unless one of the company happened to introduce politics or Shakespeare. In a moment there were sparks, and Arbuthnot the Radical and Baconian and Payne the Ultra-Conservative and anti-Baconian⁶ straightway heaved rocks at each other. Burton, who

¹ He was knighted in 1886. See p. 88.

² He wrote under the name of *Pisanus Fraxi* (Bee of an ash). Payne said to me, "We met at Ashbee's in 1883 and 1887." It was in the album of his daughter that Burton wrote the Arabic saying concerning women which may be translated: "Ask their advice ye men of wit, And always do the opposite."—See my *Life of Burton*, ii. 140.

³ Also spelt kouss-kouss. See *The Romance of a Spahi*, by Pierre Loti: Lotus Library, p. 106

⁴ Payne's notes to Galley 55 of my *Life of Burton*.

⁵ Letter to me 21 February, 1905.

⁶ As late as 1911 in his poem "A Grave at Montmartre" (Prelude to the *Heine*) he was hitting at the Baconians.

loved a fight between any persons and for any reason, or no reason, looked on approvingly. Ashbee was inclined to side with Payne.

On one of these occasions Payne said impatiently, "I cannot understand any sensible man taking the slightest interest in this sickening controversy," and then he pointed out one by one the elements that in his opinion made the Baconian theory ridiculous.¹

"But," followed Arbuthnot gently, but with something of a flash, at the same time, in his blue eyes, "Shakespeare had no education, and no person without an extremely good education could have written the plays erroneously published under the name of Shakespeare."

"If," retorted Payne, "Shakespeare had been without education, do you think the fact would have escaped the notice of such bitter and unscrupulous enemies as Nash, Greene and others who hated him for his towering superiority?"

"I merely study Shakespeare," said Arbuthnot carelessly, "from a 'curio' point of view. For his poetry I care nothing."

Whereupon Payne turned upon him savagely (it was like a lion rending a lamb): "A man who is insensible to poetry, be he who he may, must be a barbarian."

Burton, who regarded himself as a poet, approved of the sentiment. Ashbee, whose outlook was solely bibliographical, dissented, and Arbuthnot sweetly changed the conversation to Balzac, a work upon whom he was writing,² with the result, however, of another tempest, caused by the remark of Burton: "Balzac is simply a great repertory of morbid anatomy." Gentle as was Arbuthnot, there were limits even to his endurance, and he hit out valiantly in behalf of his hero, Payne encouraging him.

Like the "blest gods" who "the genial day" used to prolong, the friends invariably finished their symposium with refreshment. The blest gods had nothing but nectar, but Burton and his friends supplemented their liquor

¹ See also Payne's poem "A Grave at Montmartre."

² The MS. is in my possession.

with oysters. Burton's letter to Payne of 26 September, 1888,¹ is an invitation to one of these gatherings. "Arbuthnot," he said, "will be in town on Tuesday, October 2. What do you say to meeting him at the Langham 7 p.m. table d'hôte hour? . . . It will be our last chance of a meeting."

Payne, Sir Richard and Lady Burton, Arbuthnot, and Dr. Baker (Burton's medical attendant) dined together on the evening appointed.

We can imagine their appearance, Burton, in spite of his age, still sinewy and muscular—looking like a devil,² only fiercer; Arbuthnot, with his heavenly blue eyes, looking like an angel, only milder; Payne, with his heavy eyebrows, peaked beard and exotic appearance (who was likened by one of his friends to a Hindoo); Baker, slim and alert, drinking in all the conversation; Lady Burton, hawk-nosed and fat, interjecting as opportunity offered matters irrelevant to the conversation or downright imbecilities. What that particular conversation was about we do not know, but Payne told me that one of the subjects frequently discussed by them was that of religion.

Payne's own opinions on that subject have already been recorded in these pages; Arbuthnot regarded the great struggle of the twentieth century as the "war between Religion and Science." He said, "It will be a war to the death, for if science wins it will do away with the personal God of the Jews, the Christians and the Mohammedans, the childish doctrine or dogma of future rewards and punishments, and everything connected with the supernatural. It will be shown that Law reigns supreme. The Police, representing Law and Order, will be of more importance than the clergy. Even now we might do away with the latter, everybody becoming his own priest—a great economy."³ "Burton," says Payne,⁴

¹ *Burton's Letters to Payne*, No. 36. Written from "No. 48, The Langham."

² One of his friends said: "He had the eyes of an angel, and the jaws of a devil."

³ Preface to his MS. *Life of Balzac*.

⁴ MS. note at foot of Galley No. 69 of my *Life of Sir R. Burton*.

“thought with me Roman Catholicism the best form of Christianity for the lower classes (i.e. the people who cannot think for themselves and who want their morality wrapped up in mythological sugary). We had a good deal of talk about this at different times, and he heartily agreed with my expressed opinion that the Mohammedan was a still better religion for the classes, indeed the best of all, as being the *only practical ethical religion* and almost free from the two great demoralizing elements—dogma and priestcraft. He thought with me that Mohammedanism was likely in the near future to replace (as a popular religion) Christianity, which has no practical value as a moral agent.”

Burton was apparently not in good health and spirits that day, and he went to bed about 9 o'clock, leaving Payne and Arbuthnot to finish the evening in the smoking room.

On 15 October Burton left London, to which he was never to return alive.

Burton's letter to Payne of 15 January, 1886, is addressed to 5 Lansdowne Place, Brunswick Square; that of 26 September, 1888, to 10 Oxford Road, Kilburn. It is evident, therefore, that between those two dates Payne removed to the house in which so much of his best work was done.

The strain caused by the close application required by his translations was almost too much for him; his health gave way and his sight failed him. Even after his recovery he suffered continually from insomnia, which he calls “the worst of woes which were since Adam fell;”¹ and readers of his poems will recall the series of sonnets in *Vigil and Vision*, entitled “The Night Watches.” In the first he exclaims:

How have I sinned against thy statutes, Sleep,
That thou this many a year forsaken hast
My sorry eyes, that, whilst, their cares off cast,
All else are sunken in thy drowsy deep,

¹ *Vigil and Vision*, p. 26.

I, only I, the weapon-watch must keep,
Revolving still in thought the piteous Past,
The laggard hours each heavier than the last,
Till the chill dawn in at my casements peep ? ¹

One day when Payne and Lady Burton were guests at the same house, the subject of insomnia all of a sudden monopolized the conversation, and Payne mentioned how much he suffered from it.

"I know what will cure you," said Lady Burton.

"Pray tell me," said Payne.

"Say your prayers," was the reply.

About this time Payne became deeply attached to the daughter of Stéphane Mallarmé, to whom he was drawn both by her beauty and her mental gifts, and hoped to marry her; but the Fates were not propitious.

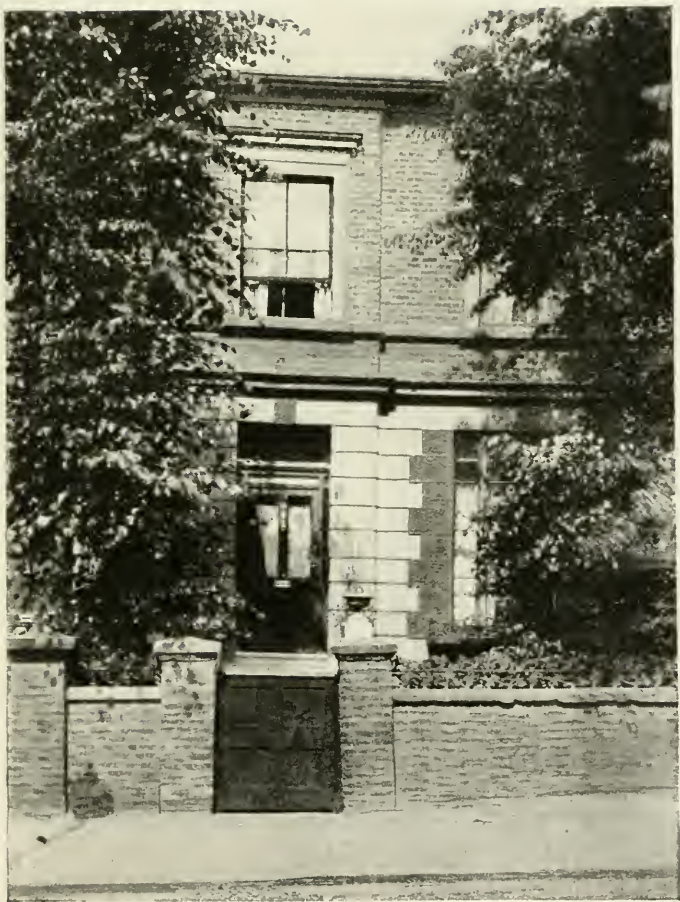
Occasionally Payne, his mother and sisters visited Oban and other parts of Scotland. On one occasion, as his face and hands became blistered, he provided himself with a white yachting cap and brown silk gloves which in no way harmonized with his suit of blue serge. He laughed heartily at the appearance of the other tourists and the natives, forgetting or not grasping that he himself looked far funnier than anybody else. People whispered to one another, "That's not an Englishman; it's some distinguished foreigner."

His mother's agility among the mountains led him to call her "the bounding chamois"; but, indeed, it needed all the poor lady's agility to keep up with him, for he was the same John Payne who in former years strode over Europe with three sisters and a big bag and thought he was enjoying himself.

On 21 November, 1888, Burton wrote to Payne from Geneva. He says²: "I am glad to hear you like the gentle rebuke administered [by Burton in the Essay accompanying his translation of the *Nights*] to Stead, Reeve & Co. You would greatly oblige me by jotting down, when you have a moment to spare, the names of reverends and ecclesi-

¹ *Vigil and Vision*, p. 25.

² *Letters of Burton to Payne*, No. 38.



FRONT OF 10 OXFORD ROAD, KILBURN, PAYNE'S HOME FROM
1887 TO 1910.

Photograph by A. H. Blake.

[To face p. 100.

asties who have written and printed facetious books. In English I have Swift and Sterne; in French Rabelais, but I want one more; also two in Italian and two in German.

Now and again Payne spent a week-end at Walton with Mr. and Mrs. George Lewis. A letter in reference to an invitation to Walton is dated 27 June, 1889. "You must not think it my fault," he tells Mrs. Lewis, "that I so seldom see you: it is always a great pleasure to me to do so, and I always accept, if at all possible, when I am asked. But Eberstadt's time is so taken up with his *cabotins*¹ and *cabotines* at this season of stress that it is no wonder if he can only now and then find a spare minute to think of arranging one of our (to me at least) most pleasant meetings, and I myself have too great a horror (morbid, no doubt, but natural to those who have all their lives been accustomed to look at happiness through other men's eyes) of wearing out my welcome to dispense with asking."

As early as 1886 Burton had published what he called his "old version" of the Arabic erotic work, *The Scented Garden*,² the most complete text of which is preserved in the library at Algiers. This "old version" consisted of a translation of the first twenty chapters of the work, that is to say, about half. He then (November 1888³) entered upon the determination to translate the whole with elaborate annotations. Payne endeavoured to dissuade him from it, and for two reasons: first, because *The Scented Garden* is entirely without literary qualities, and secondly, because he considered that Burton had, in the *Nights*, dealt more than sufficiently with secretive oriental customs.

At my first interview with Payne, further particulars of which will be given later, the following conversation took place.

¹ A French slang word now incorporated into the language and applied to artists much as Bohemians is used here.

² I go into the whole story of this in my *Life of Sir Richard Burton*, vol. 2, chap. 34.

³ *The Scented Garden* now begun in real earnest. Burton to Payne, 8 November, 1888.

T. W. And now as to *The Scented Garden*? [no part of which I had then read].¹

P. It is merely a collection of bawdy² tales, without the slightest literary merit. There is a great difference between translating tales with an occasional impure passage and bawdy tales which are nothing else. Burton and I are as opposite as the poles.

T. W. Such books are the stapelias—the carrion flowers of literature.

P. A very good illustration, but *The Scented Garden* is not literature. These books give one the impression of putrid meat. I loathe and detest everything of the kind. You have no idea to what lengths the votaries of this craze have gone. Mr.— went so far as to have made purposely for himself a tea service of sixteen pieces, every piece being illustrative of one of the sixteen paintings made by Guilio Romano to accompany Pietro Aretino's notorious sonnets. Only one set was to be made. I saw it in Paris. Was ever such folly and madness?

The Scented Garden is a filthy book without literary value of any kind. [He was thinking of Part I.] It is an exemplar of the extremest subtleties of sexual perversion. [He was thinking of Part II.] It consists of brutal and beastly stories. I begged Burton not to do it. You have no idea how in the East they split hairs over perversion. They go into it as into divinity. The time and thought spent on it is incredible.

T. W. How about the other publications of the Kama Shashtra Society?

P. They are dull books. He then spoke in general terms of Burton, Ashbee, and Arbuthnot, observing among other things "Ashbee was a learned man in Oriental Literature, Burton was quite a simple man, not at all

¹ I subsequently read Burton's "old version" and Part I of the complete edition subsequently printed at Paris, that is to say the first twenty chapters of the work, which corresponded with Burton's "old version," the proof sheets having been lent to me by the publisher; but at the time my *Life of Burton* went to press Part II (completing the work) had not appeared, and I have never seen it.

² Payne avoided this word in print. See page 162.

theatrical. Arbuthnot's *Mysteries of Chronology* [published in 1900] is most interesting."

While agreeing with Payne's estimate of the various books mentioned, one must, in order to be fair to Burton, admit that *The Scented Garden* has an anthropological value; besides, any book that has come down from the thirteenth century, whatever its evils, is not to be ignored by scholars.

But Burton proposed not only to print *The Scented Garden* but to annotate it; and insisting, as he did, not only on the "enormous anthropological and historical importance," not only of the text, but also of the proposed notes, was not to be deterred from his plan.

In my remarks on *The Scented Garden* in my *Life of Burton*, Vol. 2, p. 194, I observed: "Plumpness seems to have been the principal attraction in the sex." Payne pencilled in the margin: "This shows the negroid origin of these stories. The true Arab likes a slender woman. Examples of this abound in the *Nights*. It is the negroid Moroccan African 'Arab' [so called] generally whose degraded taste leads him to like *fat* women.¹ Old — went to Tunis on purpose to revel among the gross Tunisian women there, Jewesses principally."

Burton's letter to Payne of 28 January, 1890,² written from Algiers, is chiefly about his endeavours to find manuscripts of *The Scented Garden*. He does not speak pleasantly about the French, or Paris through which he had recently passed. "Politics and money-getting," he says, "have made the gay nation stupid as Paddies. In fact, the world is growing vile and bête. *Et vivent les Chinois!* A new Magyar irruption would do Europe much good."

In May 1890 Arbuthnot left England in order to visit Burton at Trieste. He carried with him a copy of Payne's translation of Alaeddin, which Payne had sent to Burton as a present, and also Zotenberg's MS. of *Zein ul Asnam*

¹ See also Payne's *Hafiz*, ii. 116, where the attractions of the Arab women are compared with the "over-voluminous charms of the women of North Africa."

² *Letters of Burton to Payne*, No. 39.

which Burton had lent to Payne. The volume is prefixed by a poetical dedication to Burton :

Twelve years this day—a day of Winter dreary, etc.

Burton, writing in May 1890, says¹ : “ At last Arbuthnot has brought the volume and the MS. I am delighted with the volume, and especially with the ascription so grateful in its friendly tone. I have read every word with the utmost pleasure. We might agree to differ about Cazotte.² I think you are applying to 1750 the moralities of 1890. Arbuthnot’s visit has quite set me up, like a whiff of London in the Pontine marshes of Trieste. He goes to-day—damn the luck ! but leaves us hopes of meeting during the summer in Switzerland. Best of good fortune to *Bandello* ! ”

Burton died at Trieste 20 October, 1890, and a few days afterwards Lady Burton destroyed the unfinished manuscript of *The Scented Garden*.³

In September 1890 Payne’s sister Frances was married at St. Mary Abbots, Kensington, to Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Willoughby Grenville Byam, fourth son of Lieutenant-General Edward Byam, 18th Hussars, of Byam House,⁴ Brighton, and Warblington Lodge, Havant. Payne bought a new suit to go to the wedding, but, overcome by shyness, he, instead of going, sent Mrs. Hutt, who lived next door, “ to see and report on it.”

On 2 January, 1891, Payne lost his friend Max Eberstadt, to whose worth he paid an affecting tribute in the sonnet “ To Max Eberstadt in Willesden Cemetery.” Writing to Eberstadt’s sister, Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Lewis, on 8 April, 1891, Payne says : “ Many thanks for the two scores, which I shall value over and above their intrinsic worth (which you know is great in my eyes) as a remembrance of a friend⁵ who was very dear to me

¹ *Letters of Burton to Payne*, No. 40.

² Payne had declared that Cazotte’s tales “ are for the most part rubbish.”

³ The complete story is told in my *Life of Sir Richard Burton*.

⁴ Now the Union Club.

⁵ Eberstadt.



MRS. FRANCES BYAM, A SISTER OF JOHN PAYNE.

From a photograph by Heath, Plymouth.

[To face p. 104.

and whose untimely death will always leave a void in my life, as in yours. Indeed, I am never likely again to meet one so completely sympathetic with me on all questions of principle. Of course, on details the most sympathetic must occasionally differ, and even of this there were few examples between us; the only one of which I can think for the moment was in music, and was entirely confined to the letter B, he, to my mind, thinking too much of Brahms and Beethoven and not enough of Berlioz and Boito. I shall, of course, be delighted to come down to Walton. If Saturday the 18th would suit you, I could come on that day and stay over Sunday and Monday."

In a postscript he says that Vols. 4-5 of *Bandello* "are to be delivered to-day."

In March of the same year, 1891, Payne lost his great friend Théodore de Banville, who is commemorated in a sonnet in *Vigil and Vision*.¹ In a letter to Mrs. Lewis of 21 April, 1891, there is an amusing echo of some of the words that had fallen from the reviewers of the *Bandello*. "I am still very unwell with perpetual sick headache and general nervous weakness and quite 'unfit for publication.'"

At the end of March 1892 Payne had the pleasure of meeting at Mr. George Lewis's² Sir Charles Hall, whom he admired as a conductor of the Manchester Orchestra.³

In 1892, owing to the success of his translations, Payne was able to retire from business, which "had always been confined to the quasi-literary branches of conveyancing and chancery," but he kept on his office⁴ (262 Marylebone Road 5) till 1895.

In his clerk, Mr. Coulson Mead (for whom he obtained another post), he continued to take a kindly interest, and on one occasion, when Mr. Mead had been ill, he gave him "a dozen bottles of red wine, which had been for some years in his cellar." This was, however, only one

¹ Page 64.

² Afterwards Sir George Lewis. He died 7 October, 1911.

³ Letter of Mrs. Lewis to Payne, 3 March, 1892.

⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 23.

⁵ Now pulled down.

of many instances of his good nature and thoughtfulness for others.

Another person to whom Payne was very kind was Dr. Steingass, the Arabic scholar. Payne introduced him to Arbuthnot and Yacoub Artin Pasha, and about the end of 1892 gave him assistance in his translation of the *Hariri*.¹

In 1893 Payne lost his mother. The same year his friend Mr. George Lewis received the honour of knighthood.² In the following year he spent a holiday in the Black Forest in Germany.

A letter of Payne 17 November, 1895, to Lady Lewis contains at least one interesting reference: "With regard to Sir E. Burne-Jones, you know my sentiments which are and will always be the same; but I have long ago (very reluctantly) been forced to the conclusion that he does not reciprocate my sympathy for him and have therefore forborne to press my acquaintance on him; nay, more, I have avoided casual opportunities of meeting him on the principle of the old Arab adage (so frequently quoted in the *Nights*) 'when the eye sees not the heart does not grieve.'"

In a letter to Lady Lewis of 17 December, 1895, Payne says: "I shall not fail to come on New Year's Eve." After speaking of his ailments (he was always getting chills, colds, and influenzas, owing to his dislike of the cult of the open window) he makes the following reference to Forbes-Robertson, the actor: "I enclose a view for Gertie³ of her beloved Johnston.⁴ I must say that it is a little too cruel, even for me who hold that 'none but himself can be his parody'; as an actor, that is to say; as a man, he is all that is estimable."

The postscript refers to George W. Smalley, New York correspondent of *The Times*, who for a time resided in England, an author whom Payne disliked.

¹ See my *Life of Sir R. Burton*, ii., Appendix xi. Taken also from Payne's notes to Galley No. 26 of my *Life of Burton*.

² He received his baronetcy in 1902.

³ Lady Lewis's eldest daughter.

⁴ Forbes-Robertson.

"By the by I must stipulate that I am not to be expected to take Smalley down to dinner, should he arrive unexpectedly on New Year's Eve."

In or earlier than 1887, after finishing the *Bandello*, Payne set himself the task of translating into English the whole of the works of Hafiz. The first announcement of it in print is to be found in his friend Arbuthnot's *Persian Portraits*, which was published in 1887. "It is rumoured," says Arbuthnot, "that this arduous work [of translating Hafiz] is about to be undertaken by that very ardent worker, Mr. John Payne. . . . Difficult as are the tasks that Mr. Payne has already done, and done so well, the Hafiz will be found to be the most difficult of all."¹

"Hafiz, Dante, and Shakespeare," Payne once said to me, "are the three greatest poets of the world." As he had determined on an isometrical translation, that is, one in which the metre of every line corresponds with the metre of the original, the task was one that can only be described as almost superhuman. He told me that it occupied his whole thoughts and energies for nine years.

He commenced his labours by studying the Commentary made in the seventeenth century by the Turkish Boznian Soudi, of which he made a digest in three great volumes;² and then he worked steadily for several years at the translating.

While he was thus engaged, the rendering of the Rubaiyat of Omar Kheyyam³ made many years previous (1859) by Edward FitzGerald was attracting wide attention. In my *Life of Edward FitzGerald*,⁴ while paying tribute, as must all lovers of literature, to the beauties of the poem, I pointed out that it cannot in the strict sense be called a translation of the Rubaiyat. It is not even a paraphrase. It is an adaptation. FitzGerald made use of only a certain number of Omar Kheyyam's quatrains,

¹ *Persian Portraits*, p. 62.

² See note to Payne's *Omar Kheyyam*, p. 83.

³ To keep to Payne's spelling.

⁴ Two vols., 1904.

and he did not trouble to follow Kheyyam's order. He picked and chose and did as he liked. Thus the famous "Book of verses underneath a bough" stanza is derived from two of the quatrains, Nos. 149 and 155.¹ But FitzGerald does not keep even to Kheyyam. He draws also upon Shakespeare, Calderon, and Carlyle, and here and there he introduces passages of his own. But to find fault with FitzGerald, the result of his labours being so beautiful, would be ungracious in the last degree. Having obtained a taste for Kheyyam, the world began to clamour for the whole poem. This led to the issue in 1880 of Mr. Whinfield's variorum edition of the Persian text of 500 quatrains, with a metrical translation; and in 1897 of Mr. Heron-Allen's literal translation of the 158 quatrains contained in the manuscript preserved in the Bodleian—the manuscript used by FitzGerald. Much of Omar Kheyyam still remained untranslated, and Payne resolved to render into English the whole of the work.

With this object in view, he put aside the Hafiz and devoted himself heart and soul to his new undertaking. He was further encouraged in his labours by a remark of his friend Yacoub Artin Pasha, who said that the original of Omar Kheyyam "ought to be written in letters of gold." For the purposes of his translation he took as his standard text the Lucknow Lithograph of the Rubaiyat, which contains more quatrains than any other and is better edited. This text he minutely collated with a number of other texts, printed, lithographed, and manuscript, with the result that he was able not only to elucidate some obscure passages, but also to add about 80 quatrains to the 762 of the Lucknow edition. The work appeared in 1898 and proved, financially, a great success. It is prefaced by an admirable Introduction in which Payne discusses the merits and shortcomings of previous translations, and lays before his readers his own aims. He observes that the especial peculiarity of the Rubaiyat is the intricacy of the rhyme scheme, and in particular the prevalence of that form which for want

¹ Of the Bodleian MS.

of a better name he calls the Throwback Rhyme, as for example in the following quatrain :

45. Skinker, since ruin is of Fortune *planned* for thee and me,
 This nether world is no abiding *land* for thee and me ;
 Yet, so the wine-cup in the midst but *stand* for thee and me,
 Rest thou assured the very Truth's in *hand* for thee and me.¹

He mentions other peculiar rhyme forms, and tells us that he has endeavoured as far as possible to imitate them.

Those who go to Payne's translation in the hope of meeting with the peculiar charm that attaches to FitzGerald's verses will be disappointed. Who has not quoted sometime or other, nay many times, that delectable quatrain of FitzGerald's :

A book of verses underneath the bough,
 A jug of wine, a loaf of bread,—and Thou,
 Beside me singing in the wilderness—
 Oh, wilderness were Paradise enow !

But this pleasant morsel whets the appetite of most people and gives them a desire to hear more about Kheyyam himself, his loaf of bread and the jug of wine ; and if they are of the masculine sex, they will probably not be uninterested in "Thou," or "Heart's Desire," as she is also prettily called. FitzGerald's work, with all its charms, is not satisfying. Payne gives all that is to be known. It is the complete Omar Kheyyam.

Quatrains 101, 174, 222, 595 and 833 perhaps show Payne at his best. 174 contains a charming compliment to Heart's Desire :

In this world without faith, that our sojourning-place is,
 Many things have I searched ; but the end of the case is,
 This only I know, that the cypress less straight
 Than thy shape and less lucent the moon than thy face is.

¹ Payne's translations, pp. lxx and 12.

222 runs :

An elder forth of the tavern and drunken with wine did fare,
The prayer-rag over his shoulder and wine cup in hand he bare.

“Ho, Gaffer,” quoth I, “what ails thee? How com’st thou in
such a plight?”

“Drink wine,” was the answer he gave me; “the things of the
world are air.”

409 is one of the very few quatrains in which the girl herself is supposed to be speaking. She tells the old toper that “Wit fails with age,” and that age tends to hold her “cheek’s pomegranate-flower mere paint.” Here, however, if her arrow was aimed especially at Kheyyam, she was unjust, for to the very end he remained as faithful to the pomegranate cheek (whose pomegranate cheek seems to have been immaterial to him) as to the jug of wine.

This work of Payne’s laid itself open to the most severe criticism. It is allowed by all competent authorities to be a most truthful and valuable rendering of the Persian poet, but it is charged with being, as poetry, not only uncouth, but also wearisome and unrememberable. In work of this kind, however, to be absolutely faithful and also to be continuously poetical is beyond the reach of any translator; and under this head Payne failed where every one else must certainly fail. In prose, a literal rendering combined with great beauty of expression is possible, Payne’s marvellous rendering of the *Nights* being an outstanding instance. In poetry, when dealing with work small in bulk, Payne could also achieve success, as his presentment of the *Villon* abundantly proves; but the far longer Rubaiyat turned a deaf ear to the blandishments of its translator. Nevertheless, for the brave attempt to achieve the impossible, and for the gift of a literal version of the Rubaiyat, versified in its author’s way, every lover of literature owes Payne a deep debt of gratitude.¹

It was about the year 1896, that is, while Payne was

¹ Among those who thanked Payne for his “marvellous translation” was Mr. Heron-Allen.

near the end of his translation of Omar Kheyyam, that he wrote the affecting poem called "The Grave of my Songs," with its touching references to Mrs. Snee and happier days. Of this, however, we shall have more to say when we come to deal with the book in which it was for the first time printed—Payne's *Collected Poems*.

In 1898 Payne lost his friend Stéphane Mallarmé,¹ whom he celebrates in a sonnet² as

Friend of my youth with whom I shared the chance
Of life for thirty years in joy and woe.

Among those to whom Payne gave copies of the second edition of *Songs of Life and Death* was his brother Harry, and hereby hangs a pathetic story. Some years afterwards Harry fell in love with Miss Florence Collier. The attractiveness of her person was united to a warmth of nature which to Harry's sweet and gentle disposition was irresistible, but his family were opposed to the union. Perceiving how troubled her lover was, Miss Collier, though it almost broke her heart to utter the words, suggested that after all it would perhaps be better that they should part. "I want you," she said, "to have all the happiness in life possible. If I thought you were unhappy, I should be unhappy also." The Fates seeming to be against them, they sorrowfully broke off the engagement. But the separation lasted only three days. Harry, finding the situation intolerable, resolved, come what might, to return to Miss Collier, and eventually, on 4 June, 1898, they were married. Two persons more suited to each other could not be imagined. Their life was a beautiful idyll. Fruits of this happy marriage were five daughters, one of whom died in early childhood. Harry³ survived his brother John,⁴ but by not many months.

¹ They were born in the same year, 1842.

² *Vigil and Vision*, p. 63. In Payne's *Latter Days* are included two translations from Mallarmé.

³ He died 12 Nov., 1916.

⁴ John died 11 Feb., 1916.

After his death Mrs. Payne, in going through his papers, found a copy in his handwriting of John's poem "A Farewell" (the poem from *Songs of Life and Death*, which had been suggested by Simeon Solomon's sketch "The Parting"), and folded up with it was a piece of paper containing the single word "Flo." The poem had evidently been written out on one of the sad three days during which the lovers had been separated. Oh, how one wishes that John could have heard this lovely—this touching little story! That he could have heard that words of his had been the means of bringing about so sweet, so ideal a union. Solomon, in his reflections on the power of woman's beauty, describes it as "terrible as an army with banners." Not less powerful are the burning words of a great poet.

Harry was in the habit of reading his brother's works over and over again. He said to his wife, "My dear, read and study them, the more you read them the more you will love them."

In the summer of 1898 died Sir Edward Burne-Jones, and the following letter (28 August, 1898) was written to Lady Lewis after Payne had heard the news:

"I need hardly say how much I sympathize with you over our joint and grievous loss. You may imagine how great a sorrow it is for me, making fresh again the memory of dear Max's¹ untimely death, now seven and a half years ago; and you saw so much more of our beloved and revered friend that your grief must be yet more poignant, because more constantly present than mine. Alas! after fifty one's feet stumble upon the graves of our dearest at every step and life becomes but a matter of memory.

"I am exceedingly sorry that I cannot avail myself of your kind invitation. As you know, my natural tendency as a man himself unhappy from the birth, is *towards* the unhappy; but at present I am much fettered by circumstances. I am daily expecting some friends from abroad, to receive whom I must be at home. Two of them

¹ Max Eberstadt. See p. 104.



HARRY R. PAYNE, ABOUT 1915.

From a photograph by W. S. Stuart, Richmond, Surrey.

[To face p. 112.

[Yacoub Artin Pasha and his wife] are from the East ; I have not seen them for several years and they are coming to London specially to see me. . . . I have been in Bohemia for some five weeks and have come back somewhat better in health."

At this period the Hutts lived next door to Payne. Between his house and theirs was a speaking tube, and by means of a ladder on each side the garden wall visits could be exchanged without going through the street. He used to invite them and Mrs. and Miss Heriot to strawberry and cream teas under the bays.

CHAPTER X

“THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF HAFIZ”

1899-1901

IN June and July 1899, Payne spent six weeks in the Swiss Jura, visiting Ballaigues, Yverdon, Bienne and Macolin.

On his return he writes to Lady Lewis 9 July, 1899: “Please tell Madam Hirsch¹ when you write to her how very sorry I was to miss seeing her. Please give her and Mr. Hirsch my kindest regards. It was a great pleasure to me to see them *en passant par Les Troyens*² in February last and a reminder of old times.

“I found also a pleasant surprise, not in the least expected, in the shape of a private letter from A. Balfour’s secretary to the effect that I had been granted a pension of £100 a year. This will relieve me from all anxieties in the pecuniary way, my wants being small and more ideal than material, and enable me to pursue the quest after health with some chance of success. Please accept my heartiest thanks for your most kind exertions on my behalf. I own, I feel, the success entirely to you and am very grateful, whilst at the same time feeling no small compunction at all the trouble I must have given you.”

The letter of 4 November, 1899, to Lady Lewis commences with the usual tale of influenza. He goes on: “Hafiz I *must* finish before I die; when it is done and printed I can say ‘*Domine nunc dimittis*’ and can die *getrost*, content to leave to posterity to do that justice

¹ Lady Lewis’s sister.

² An opera (a trilogy rather) by Hector Berlioz.

to my work which has been completely denied me by my contemporaries."

Lady Burne-Jones was at this time engaged upon a biography of her husband—the work which eventually appeared as the *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, and she applied, through Lady Lewis, to Payne for assistance. In this letter Payne says: "I hope, by the way, that Lady Burne-Jones's enquiry does not imply that she wishes me to write anything about her beloved husband; it would pain me to refuse, and yet I feel the utter impossibility of doing anything else, ungracious as it seems."

Having completed his translation of Omar Kheyyam, Payne returned to the *Hafiz*, which was eventually published in 3 vols. in 1901. If the average Englishman were asked what he knew of Hafiz he would probably recite Sir William Jones's elegant lines:

Sweet maid, if thou would'st charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold,
That rosy cheek that lily hand
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold
Than all the gems of Samarcand.

This is all very pretty, but unfortunately it is not Hafiz. The slim, seductive beauty whom Hafiz sings had neither a rosy cheek nor a white hand. What she really could boast was a black mole,¹ which in the East is regarded as one of the most coveted accompaniments—an enhancer, indeed—of female beauty; hence it was for the lady's mole, and not for her rosy cheek, which, by the by, was really green,² that Hafiz in his ecstacy would have thrown away two whole cities.³ As for the concluding stanza of Jones's poem there is not in it a single word or thought that corresponds with the actual utterance of Hafiz. Numerous other writers have rendered into English certain of Hafiz's ghazels, but it was reserved for Payne

¹ Payne's translation, i. p. 12.

² Payne's *Omar Kheyyam*, Quatrains No. 368 and 622 and note. The Orientals consider the dark down on the cheeks of their girls a beauty and call it "green," in allusion to the first minute blades of grass.

³ "Bokhara, ay, and Samarcand."—Payne's translation, i. p. 12.

to make an isometrical translation of the entire "Divan," that is to say the whole of Hafiz. When we point out that the "Divan" consists of 615 ghazels and 78 other poems, altogether equivalent to about 20,000 English decasyllabic lines, and that Payne rendered the whole of this enormous mass in accordance with the metrical scheme of the original, some conception will be formed of the gigantic nature of his achievement. Indeed, compared with it all his other enterprises of the kind—even the translation of the *Nights*—were as child's play.

The work was prefaced by some original lines by Payne—one of the most lovely poems that he or any other man ever produced—that blaze of beauty "The Prelude to Hafiz."¹ With what wonderful words of invitation he introduces us to the superb Persian!

Here be rubies red and radiant, of the colour of the heart,
Here to topazes sun-golden, such as rend the dusk apart,
Here be sapphires steeped in heaven, for the salving of your smart.

If your souls are sick with sorrow, here is that which shall appease.
If your lips are pale with passion, here is that which hath the keys
To the sanctuaries of solace and the halidomes of ease.

But the whole of this inimitable poem should be read. Every stanza gives transports to the soul. There is nothing better even in Hafiz himself. It is true, as Payne declares, that Hafiz takes the whole sweep of human experience, and he irradiates all things with his sun-gold and his wisdom. To Shiraz, his native town, he was passionately attached, and no inducements could persuade him to abandon the waters of Ruknabad and the earth and air of Musella.² Did he not burst out with:

Hail to Shiraz and its station past compare!
God preserve it from cessation! is my prayer.

O'er our Ruknabad an hundred "God preserve it's!"
For its dulcet waters life eternal bear.³

¹ Also printed in *Sir Winfrith*, published by the John Payne Society.

² A suburb of Shiraz.

³ Payne's translation, ii. p. 136.

He certainly paid a short visit to Yezd,¹ whose king treated him with indifference, and to Hurmuz² where he experienced favours, but he found no place like his beloved Shiraz.

There is a well-known picture by Rembrandt representing the artist himself, with his arm round his wife, who is seated on his knee, and with his right hand clasping and raising a tall glass of liquor, and he is looking with a merry eye towards the spectator. That is very much the attitude of Hafiz towards the world, though we are not prepared to hold him up as a model of constancy. Indeed, the lady whom he seats on his knee, and whose wrists and neck he endues with "bracelets of jacinth and jasmine," while he drinks to her from a cup encrusted with pearls and rubies, is not always necessarily the seductive Leila. It is always, however, "the Beloved," though it did not seem to matter very much which Beloved. If Shireen prove inconstant, Hafiz is not inconsolable. There is Cradled-Moon, Musk-Deer, Strutting-Pheasant, Rose-in-hood, and other Peri-faced damsels! for Allah is very bountiful. Without a "loveling" of some sort to overcome him by her witchery Hafiz would not be Hafiz. Gazing upon her beseeching face hung about with ebon and grisamber-perfumed tresses, he in his ecstacy compares it to the moon in the cloudy zone of Scorpion. But when he wants another kiss (which he was nearly always wanting) she says provokingly that he must wait, seeing that according to the Persians it is unlucky to transact business when the moon is in that sign.³ Sometimes he sincerely wishes that the fires enkindled in him by her beauty could be extinguished:

Lo, no strength I have remaining in me, friend,
For that fair she is and lovesome past apprise.

Short our hand is and the date is on the palm;
Lame our foot and far as heaven the emprise.

¹ Payne's translation, i. p. 3; iii. p. 153.

² *Id.*, iii. p. 153.

³ Payne's *Hafiz*, ii. p. 76.

If Hafiz is fond of wine and roses, as well as of ladies, it is, he says, because in the beginning the clay of his life was blended with grape-juice and rose-water. But love, roses and wine by no means monopolize his work ; and even the lines that do bear on these subjects are held by almost all orientals to admit, like *Solomon's Song*, of a sacred interpretation. "Of religious liberty," to use the biting words of James Mew, Hafiz "is everywhere a supporter ; he did not know any better—he was only an infidel."

In one of the ghazels we are reminded that between ourselves and the realization of our hopes there is no exterior barrier. "Thou thyself art thine own obstruction," he says ; "up and no more be stayed." In Ode 345¹ Hafiz laments the indifference of the age to its men of genius and worth, but perhaps he is at his best when at his very saddest, as in the magnificent Ode 528² :

I went to the garden one morning
That I might pluck a rose,
When, suddenly, full in my hearing,
The song of a bulbul rose.

With love for a rose afflicted,
Like me was the wretch become
And so to the meadow-breezes
Was casting his tale of woes.

Reflecting on this incident he comes to the conclusion that

Full many a rose in the garden,
Hath blossomed on this our world ;
But no one, without a thorn-priek,
E'er gathered thereof a rose.

Hafiz, no hope of joyance,
Have from this round of life ;
For in it a thousand thorn spikes
And not one rosebud grows.

This, it will be said, is as sad as a chapter in *Ecclesiastes*. Yes, and it is as beautiful. But the question will be

¹ Payne's translation, ii. p. 158.

² *Id.*, iii. p. 98.

asked, Is Payne's work all that could be wished as a translation? Did he perform for Hafiz what in so splendid a manner he performed for the *Arabian Nights*? Those who go to the work for a faithful rendering of the original will say, "It is perfection"; but those who had expected a beautiful series of poems such as a Payne unfettered could give will say emphatically "No." Indeed, they will find it in many places uncouth, forced and hard to read, for it is open to the same criticism as the rendering of Omar Kheyyam. The truth is Payne had once more attempted the impossible. He sacrificed himself on the altar of Hafiz, just as previously he had sacrificed himself on the altar of Omar Kheyyam. An isometrical translation from Hafiz cannot possibly result in high, or rather sustained high poetry. The too terrible birth agonies left their impress upon the offspring. Yet what a feast Payne has given to the English-speaking world! Yacoub Artin Pasha, minister of education at Cairo, one of the first of native scholars and a devotee of the great Shirazi said that with Payne's *Hafiz* in hand he well-nigh forgot that he was reading a translation, so happily does the English rendering combine faithfulness to the meaning and reproduction of the manner of the original.

The enormous amount of thought and work that were necessary to the production of this translation led Payne to describe this period to me as "The Valley of the Shadow of Hafiz." By the time it was finished his health once more broke down. The strain had been too much for him, and a long illness ensued.

In his Introduction to *Hafiz*, Payne associates that poet with Shakespeare, Socrates and Mendelssohn—men who differ *toto coelo* from the rank and file of humanity—calling them the Parthenogeniti of life, "intemperate and free they were born, as the flowers of the field, and pure and incontaminable shall they abide for ever."

Hafiz in the east, like Virgil in the west, was often used for bibliomantic purposes.

Of the extreme beauty of Payne's original poem, "The Prelude to Hafiz," I have already spoken. Let me here impress upon the reader that all Payne's Preludes, Dedications

tions, or whatever they are called are worthy of the closest study. They are little works of art; but occupying the places they do, they are in danger of being overlooked. One calls particularly to mind:

"This is the house of dreams" (*Masque of Shadows*), "To Richard Wagner" (*Poems of Life and Death*), "Like as the sunflower" (*New Poems*), "The Prelude to Hafiz" (*Hafiz*), "Sine me liber" (*Collected Poems*), "Song Birds" (*Carol and Cadence*), "A Grave at Montmartre" (*Heine*), "The flower that bloweth" (*Flower o' the Thorn*), and "Introit" (*The Way of the Winepress*).

Ashbee died in 1900, and in May 1901 Payne lost his friend F. F. Arbuthnot, who to the end preserved all his gentle and lovable characteristics. His curious work *The Mysteries of Chronology* had appeared in 1900. Among his last compositions were prefaces for oriental works by Rehatsek and Steingass and an original work *The Life of Balzac*, the MS. of which is in my possession. He was buried at Shamley Green, Guildford. He left money for the Oriental Translation Fund, and his memory will always be honoured by Orientalists. Dr. Steingass died in January 1903. "I was much attached to him," said Payne to me, "and felt his death sorely."

CHAPTER XI

COLLECTED POEMS. VIGIL AND VISION

1902-1903

As we have seen, the shock occasioned by the death of Mrs. Snee (in 1880) rendered Payne for a very long period incapable of writing more original verse. The year 1896 was marked by the production of his lovely poem "The Grave of my Songs," presently to be considered, and then he once more lapsed into silence. At last, however, at the beginning of 1902, the spell was really broken and "the Long Hiatus," as we used to call it, became an event of the past. Set to work, poet! But he needed no spur, he began once more to write from the soul. He had awaked to life ;

the sun thrust through
The air rained gold and the day broke blue.¹

"Oh," he exclaims,

Oh, how the hope and the love flowered out
In blossom of ballad and carol and lay
That had hidden in silentness many a day !²

* * * * *

The love in my life had found
Its gate of sound.³

Ardent in everything he attempted, he never forced his muse, but always waited until the sacred impulse visited him. Like the fabled griffin he never spread his wings

¹ and ² *Carol and Cadence*, p. 160.

³ *Id.*, p. 161.

when he had "sick feathers." With M. Taine he held that "nothing can be absolutely beautiful that is not perfectly spontaneous."¹ This accounts for the ease and absence of effort that characterize all his poems. As he tells us in *Vigil and Vision* (p. 12) his soul flowered best in the winter's night.² "In the closing week of January 1902," he writes,³ "I was suddenly taken with an attack of verse production (there's no better comparison for the phenomenon, in its suddenness and lack of apparent cause, than to an access of fever) and for six weeks following verse poured through me literally day and night without cessation, the result being some three dozen poems of various lengths, amounting in all to 4,000 lines of verse. In this access, which began with the 'Requiem'⁴ and ended with 'Evensong,'⁵ my only conscious part was the labour of writing down what came to me; it ceased as suddenly as it came, in the middle of an unfinished poem, 'The Death of Pan.'" Evidently this access of poetry is the one celebrated in *Carol and Cadence* (p. 217), where it is described as the verse-flow of "Forty Days,"⁶ during which he wandered "noon and night Song's solitary ways." In "Song-stress"⁷ he calls it "High-water Time," and in a letter to Mrs. Tracy Robinson "a six weeks' attack of poetry."

In the middle of 1902 Payne published in two volumes his Collected Poems, with the title of *The Poetical Works of John Payne*. They contained the poems that had appeared in *The Masque of Shadows*, *Intaglios*, *Songs of Life and Death*, *Lautrec* and *New Poems*, together with "The Grave of my Songs" and the poems that had resulted from the January verse-flow, namely, the blithe and fascinating "Sir Winfrith," the musical "Roses of Solomon," "The Last of Hercules," "Usque ad Portas," "The Pact of the Twin Gods" and "Anchises." The

¹ *Taine's Letters*, iii. p. 222.

² He makes a similar remark in *Carol and Cadence*, p. 217.

³ In his *Autobiography*, in my possession.

⁴ "Requiem for our Dead in South Africa," *Collected Poems*, ii. 324. Poace was signed 31 May, 1902.

⁵ "Evensong," *id.*, ii. 354.

⁶ *Carol and Cadence* (1908), p. 137.

⁷ *Id.*, p. 215.

continued influence of the *Arabian Nights* on Payne revealed itself in the inclusion of a series of poems founded on some of the shorter tales in that work "Flowers from Syrian Gardens."

Of the new poems in the collection the most beautiful and also the most pathetic is "The Grave of my Songs."¹ Swinburne² and other friends of Payne had asked why he had ceased to write original and noble poetry.

I hear folk question why
The fountain of my songs, that once ran high
And full, is fallen dry.
 yet the cause
Who will may know:
My voice is dumb for weariness of woe.

And looking back beyond "the Long Hiatus" he continues:

Love was my dayspring and my evenglow,
The sun that set my April blossoming,
That made my summer carolful; and, lo!
My daystar set in darkness long ago.

Thinking of the grave at Kensal Green, he says:

My sun lies buried in a nameless tomb
Midmost a mighty desert of the dead

In a later line he speaks of London as

This grim graveyard city of her birth.

Most tender and most beautiful are the lines in which he recalls the loved features of the lost divinity:

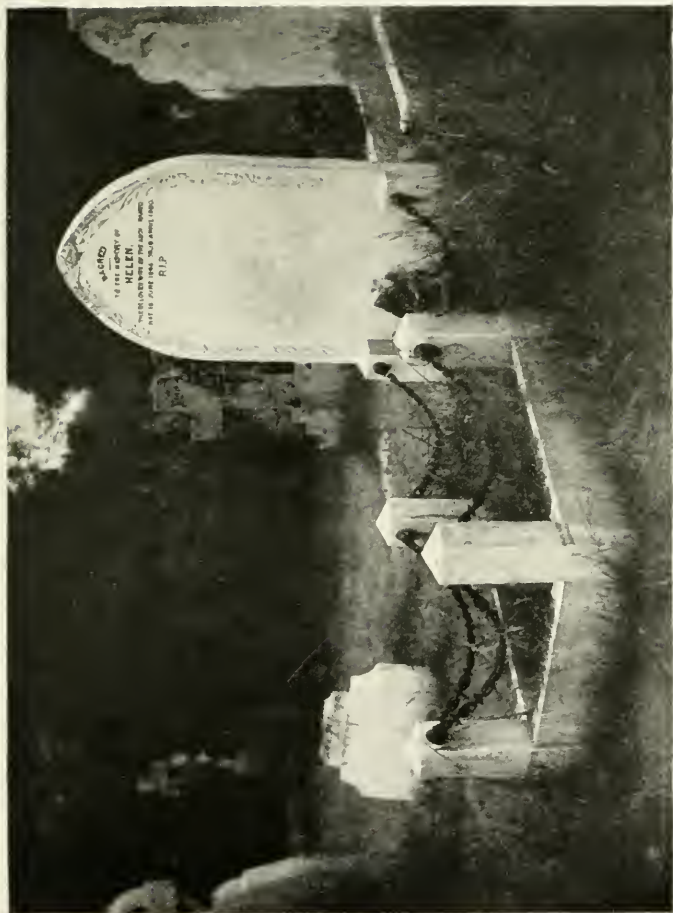
¹ In a letter to Mrs. Tracy Robinson, 9 December, 1902, Payne, after referring to the death of Mrs. Snee, says: "'The Grave of my Songs' of course refers to this episode of my life and was written some six years ago."

² Four letters from Swinburne to Payne (1898-1902) were sold at Sotheby's 29 June, 1916. In one Swinburne speaks of Payne's "original and noble poetry."

Ah, what is left us of the dear-loved dead ?
The dainty gold-fledged head,
The eyes, soft grey,
From which the dreams of childhood never fled ;
The mouth's rose-campion red,
The lips, on which the faint smile sat away,
Sad as the break of April's youngest day
And rose-blush cheeks and forehead, garlanded
With clustering curls astray.

Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs. Byam regarded "Love's Autumn" (Vol. 2, p. 298) as "one of the most perfect things" their brother ever wrote. Others have found special delight in "A Bacchic of Spring," "A Soul's Antiphon," and "Trinitas Trinitatum," but all the poems have Payne's chemic and ethereal touch. The melody of the absolutely perfect "Roses of Solomon," in which all the music of all the spheres seems crystallized, reminds that Payne, unlike most poets, was an able and enthusiastic musician. The piano was to him what the lyre was to Orpheus. He presents to us not only the deep thought and the choice phrase, but also marvellous rhythmic effects.

He also differs, as we have already shown, from most other poets in the absolute spontaneity of his productions. He did not, like FitzGerald and some other distinguished artists in verse, write out a few lines and then labour at them like a lapidary with a precious stone. He was no artificer in mosaic. A truly Orphic poet, his best work was performed in moments of complete objectivation, when the whole world and all that therein was, were entirely forgotten amid the riot of rhythmical conception. And so he is to be compared to the pythoness on the tripod ; for, remarkable as are his melodic effects, his poems when once set down required little more than clerical correction. And yet almost invariably the fine thought is presented in exquisite phraseology. A glorious jewel in a glorious ouch. It is true that his ethereal soul welled forth in his poems, yet we feel in reading them that we are in the presence also of a great intellectual power—a nightingale with a Schopenhauer's brain.



MRS. HELEN SNEE'S GRAVE.
From a photograph by A. H. Blake.

“My mode¹ of original production both in prose and verse,” says Payne, “has been curiously inconstant, and it is only by an *a posteriori* process that I can trace any of the influences that affected it. My verse in particular has never been written in cold blood; ideas and subjects have lain dormant in my brain for months, and even years, till some unexplained influence has played the part of Vulcan’s hammer, and loosed the imprisoned Minerva, ready armed; and then there is no question of style or method, the pen can hardly move fast enough for the imprisoned flood of verse. The poem is committed to paper as in a dream, and I am surprised when I awake to find what I have done. I cannot, therefore, tell you anything about my method of labour as regards style, simply because labour there is practically none, correction being almost always only a matter of rectifying the mechanical slips of the pen consequent upon the furious haste with which the poem is committed to paper. I only set down what comes to me, whence I know not, and one might as justly describe the zinnias and tigridias of the Mexican plains or the ixias and sparaxis of the South African veldt as owing their gorgeous colourings and beautiful forms to elaborate gardening and painful cultivation as accuse me of artificial construction of verse and deliberate elaboration.”² In short, Payne’s poems are the spontaneous outpouring of his soul. The best contain scarcely a word that one would wish altered. They are as irresponsible as the sea.

In this same year, 1902, Payne issued as a Supplement to *Collected Poems* “a slender sad-coloured” volume, *The Descent of the Dove and other Poems*, the contents of which subsequently appeared in *Songs of Consolation*.

The John Payne who took up his pen again in 1902 was a very different man from the John Payne of the early—the prehistoric—poems as he called them. “They are too Tennysonian,” he once said to me. “*Sine me liber*”³ is useful as a psychological introduction to my

¹ *Autobiography*, p. 13.

² *Id.*, p. 15.

³ *Prelude to Collected Poems*.

new period.¹ He also spoke of these early poems as "those pallid blossoms,"

The idle sport of thrice enchanted lands,
Dim garlands gleamed in many a dream-world way.

The former Payne was a writer of beautiful verse, the latter Payne was not only a great poet but also a profound philosopher. He who obtains *Collected Poems* and imagines that he possesses the ripest fruit of Payne's genius will have made a fatal mistake. These volumes contain for the most part only the poems written previous to the Long Hiatus. Many of them, it is true, are very beautiful, but nearly all Payne's finest work is to be found in the volumes of his latter years: *Vigil and Vision* (1903), *Songs of Consolation* (1904), *Carol and Cadence* (1908), *Flower o' the Thorn* (1909), and *The Way of the Winepress*.

Payne sent copies of his *Collected Poems* to Swinburne and Watts-Dunton. Swinburne's acknowledgment I have not seen, but the following is Watts-Dunton's:

"28th September, 1902.

"MY DEAR PAYNE,—I could not easily make you realize the great pleasure that your superb present has given both Swinburne and me. I have always been a great admirer of your work. It has more imagination in it and more romance and more of what *I* call beauty than the work of any poet born since Swinburne, and the get-up of the books makes one's mouth water.

"I must think that the way in which you are ignored by what is humorously called the 'literary world' of the present moment is a great puzzle. It is so easy, however, nowadays to be exploited by the pressmen that I think it is your own noble whim to hide yourself that is really the cause of the anomaly. It is a fact (for I have looked) that your name does not appear even in the amazing *Who's Who*. I wonder whether you could

¹ Conversation with me 25 April, 1913.

not come and see us some day. I need not say that it will give us the greatest delight.

“Very sincerely yours,

“Theodore Watts-Dunton.”¹

At the end of *Collected Poems* we find the following announcement: “In Preparation—*The Book of Kings* (*Shah Nameh*), by Ferdausi; *The Pentameron*; *The Life and Death of Cuculain*; *François Rabelais and other Prose Studies*.” Burton’s *Pentameron* had appeared in 1893. Dissatisfied with it, Payne evidently intended to carry out his own original intention. None of these projects, however, reached the press. The *François Rabelais and other Prose Studies* would probably have consisted of the articles on Rabelais and Dolet already alluded to in this work.

At the time Payne was publishing his *Collected Poems* he possessed three Persian cats—Gruff, Top and Shireen (whose name recalls the lady sung by Nizami and the refrain “Alas! Shireen”), and a little Angora called Rover, all of which are immortalized in the poem *Vere Novo*,² written in March 1902. Rover “died in her tenth year,” on 2 July, and the event gave origin to the sonnet “In Memoriam Rover.”³ Some of these cats had six claws instead of the customary five.

The subject of Payne’s *Collected Poems* leads one to a comment on his prose. Ordinarily, as will be seen from the specimens of it in this biography, it was both clear and beautiful. Finer English, indeed, no man could write. Ordinarily, too, his sentences were of moderate length, but occasionally he indulged, as a sort of literary gymnastic, in sentences that can only be described as Brobdingnagian. In the notes to *Collected Poems* is what is probably the longest sentence in the language. It consists of 603 words! It is, of course, grammatically perfect. Every clause hangs on its proper peg, every

¹ On 1 December, 1902, Watts-Dunton writes to thank Payne for the Supplement to the *Collected Poems*.

² *Collected Poems*, ii. p. 318.

³ *Vigil and Vision*, p. 78, and *Collected Poems*, ii. p. 394 notes.

adjective, every adverb has a reason for its existence. But what a sentence! The very thought of it makes one perspire.

Payne and John Trivett Nettleship, whose name figures so conspicuously in the early pages of this work, had for long drifted apart. A true man of genius, Nettleship had obtained far less recognition than he deserved, and yet he achieved a certain measure of success. As we have already noticed he about 1870 ceased from the mystical work of his youth and became known as an animal painter. He differed from the school of Landseer as light differs from darkness. He painted animals as they were. His tigers were lithe, sly and savage—with teeth—oh, what teeth! His lions had no story to tell or moral to inculcate. They were not noble domestic animals such as one sees in Trafalgar Square or on the obverse of a shilling. They were bloody-minded brutes with eyes—oh, what eyes! You didn't seem to want Nettleship's lions on the hearthrug.¹

Nettleship died on 31 August, 1902, at the age of 61. Though he and Payne had ceased to be friends, nevertheless, the news fell on Payne like a "sepulchral stone," and the sonnet which the incident provoked bears witness that Payne had never ceased from kindly feelings towards his quondam friend. He says

You loved me not; nay for your thought alone
 You loved, your wayward thought, that would not out,
 That mured you life-long in a mist of doubt
 And died with you, to blossom yet unblown.
 Yet I, I loved you, as I loved my youth,

and loving him Payne felt that somewhat of his "Spring of sooth² and dream" had sunk into the "darkling haze of the insatiable past." The second of the Triumvirate had fallen.

In September 1902, just after he was 60, Payne wrote

¹ In April 1918 I saw a number of Nettleship's animals at 28 Wigmore Street. I had tea among them. One of Nettleship's daughters married Mr. Augustus John, the well-known artist.

² Reality.

the *Autobiography* which has several times been cited in these pages, and which was given to me for the purposes of this work in the year 1905. On page 23 is a passage which allows us to look as through a window into the state of his mind at the time he was writing it. After referring to the "harsh treatment" doled out to him by his father, as related in our first chapter, he says: "Thus early was instilled into me the habits of solitude, self-concentration and self-abnegation, looking to no one for help and expecting no sympathy from anyone; and I cannot help feeling that it says a good deal for the native soundness of my nature that the unhappy experiences of my youth and, indeed, of my whole life, together with the injustice with which I feel that I have been treated by the literary world, have not been able to sour me and that, though an incurably melancholy man I am no misanthrope. Like Sir Adrian in *The Light of Scarthey*, if (as I fear) many or most people are distasteful to me, I hate no one and feel that my heart grows every year more readily open to pity and sympathy. Nor am I, on the whole, discontented with my life; though I have at times had a hard struggle, yet I am happier than many in having never been compelled to do for bread's sake any literary work other than that which was congenial to me and in that I have always been able, without betraying my vocation, to earn enough to supply my modest wants, my only luxuries (or rather necessities) being books and music, which fortunately are cheap. The one thing which is really a source of bitter regret to me is the feeling that, notwithstanding the immense mass of work which I have accomplished and every portion of which I am conscious of having done with my might, I am drawing near to the end of my working day (I was sixty the other day, 23 August, 1902) without having given the world anything like the measure of my real powers (in poetry especially), owing to the lack of that modest measure of appreciation and encouragement which is to aesthetic production as sunshine to the vegetable creation, and without which no artist can give forth the best which is in him, even as no plant can yield its true flowerage in the

dark. This frame of mind (appeasement and resignation without discontent) is, I think, clearly manifest in my later poems, especially in the last-written 'Evensong',¹ which may be my 'Swan-song,' and the last line of which 'Duty done' I am quite content should be the epigraph of my life work."

Other passages from the *Autobiography* will be found scattered up and down the pages of this book.

About this time Mrs. Tracy Robinson conceived the idea of bringing out in America a selection from Payne's poems, prefaced by introductions written by herself and her husband. Payne, in giving the required permission, expressed the pleasure he felt in being able to number Mrs. Robinson as well as her husband among those who appreciated his poems. He says, in a very long letter, 9 December, 1902²: "It is always a delight to a writer to find that his work—the virtue gone out of him—has made him yet another friend in a far land; and in this case it is especially grateful to me, as you are the wife of an old and devoted friend. I think your essay on my verse excellent, and thoroughly adapted to its original purpose of making my poems known to the American public through a magazine or the like, but you will, I fancy, find on proceeding to adopt it as an introduction to a volume of Selections, that it will need a good deal of remodelling." In order to help her in this task he sent her a number of notes. After alluding to the death of Mrs. Snee, he says: "'The Grave of my Songs' of course refers to this episode of my life and was written some six years ago. The majority of the new poems in *Collected Poems* belong to January and March of this year (1902) when I had a six weeks' attack of poetry, which produced some 4,000 lines. One of these, a quasi-dramatic poem of 750 lines, 'The Descent of the Dove,' I have relegated to a privately printed Supplement as it deals in too mediaeval a spirit of frankness with Christian mythology to be acceptable to those who find an anthropomorphic faith necessary to their comfort, and I should be sorry

¹ *Collected Poems*, ii. p. 354.

² *Letters to the Robinsons*, No. 1.

Memoranda

The first literary effort I can remember making is the
 critical treatise, upon a collection of mine or ten, of
 a number of the Odes of Horace, published at Rome, I think
 by the comparison of a series of poems (and in my time)
 after the fashion of the village of Rome, upon the
 subject of the landing of Caesar at England and the Roman
 conquest of Great Britain. During your own
 production of my two books, I engaged several other
 subjects, necessary. But my other works were long
 and not very successful. I have written some of the
 dozen or more half-digested, and I have written some of the
 best of my life.

REPRODUCTION OF FIRST 12 LINES OF JOHN PAYNE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL "MEMORANDA" WHICH WERE
 WRITTEN BY HIS OWN HAND. THERE ARE 19 MORE LINES ON THE PAGE WHEN THIS WAS TAKEN.

to hurt any sincere believer's feelings, though I regret the omission, as I consider the poem my masterpiece." He tells her that he leaves the selection entirely to her and an American man of letters, Dr. Burton, who had interested himself in the project. He goes on: "It is curious, by the by, how one may go all one's life without voicing in verse one's most devout preferences, e.g. my love for children and animals 'borders' (as Dickens's son-in-law Charles Collins¹ says) 'well nigh on insanity,' but there is no trace of either passion in my poems.² Such are the ironies of fate!"

In connection with this subject I remember Mrs. Pritchard (his favourite sister) once saying to me: "I am not once referred to in connection with any poem he ever wrote with the exception of 'May Margaret,'³ which is dedicated to me."

Commencing at Christmas 1902 and continuing into 1903, came to Payne another access of poetry when 224 sonnets were produced in nine weeks. Some 150 of these were published in his next volume *Vigil and Vision* issued in the following October.

Writing to Mrs. Robinson 19 February, 1903,⁴ he condoles with her on account of certain disturbances at Colon where he thinks things "must still be somewhat topsy-turvy after all the 'tyrannous fun' (as Beddoes would call it) that has been agate there." In connection with the proposal that his portrait should appear in the Selection he says: "Certainly, I have no objection; and if I can screw up my courage to that ordeal (and it is a grievous one to a nervous wretch like myself, whose first idea is always to hide away my personality) of having a new one taken; meanwhile I will send you a copy, otherwise you have, I think, a copy of that taken some 20 or 25 years ago. . . . I am sending you the Supplement.⁵ I have had only 25 copies printed for private gifts. Beyond the 'Descent of the Dove,' and the

¹ See sonnet on him in *Carol and Cadence*, p. 174.

² There is, however, in his later vols.—*Carol and Cadence*, for example.

³ *Songs of Life and Death*.

⁴ *Letters to the Robinsons*, No. 2.

⁵ To *Collected Poems*.

second poem, 'A Grave at Montmartre'¹ it contains only 'curiosities' which I have printed only as a contribution to future literary history."

At the end of a long letter to Mrs. Robinson of 26 February, 1903,² he mentions his descent from Sir John Hawkins and that Hawkins was the original name of the family "to which Payne was added (on marriage with an heiress of that name, we believe) many generations ago. The family name as borne by my father was Hawkins-Payne, but we of the younger generation have abandoned the double-barrelled name out of disgust at modern snobbish practice in this kind."

Writing to Mrs. Robinson 24 April, 1903,³ Payne says: "The verse visitation of January-March last (extending curiously enough over exactly the same period and producing the same amount—4,000 lines—of verse as that of 1902) resulted in the appearance of no fewer than 224 sonnets (beside nearly 1,000 lines of other verse), I think the best work I have ever done. The copying has given me a slight recurrence of writer's cramp, of which I had a very severe attack in 1883, after the first nine vols. of the *Nights*, the whole of which I copied out three times with my own hand, *horribile dictu*! If the American edition comes off I hope to get a special portrait sketch drawn for it by a nephew of mine⁴ who is a clever artist." In a letter to Mrs. Robinson 26 May, 1903,⁵ Payne speaks of "the one piece of luck" which had befallen him in his literary career, namely, the grant to him "in 1898 of a Civil List Pension of £100 a year by the Government," in acknowledgment of his "services to Oriental Literature." He continues: "I am going through the sickening and tedious process of having my new volume of poems⁶ rejected by publisher after publisher, who won't even trouble themselves to be quick about it."

¹ This important poem is considered in chapter xviii, p. 234.

² *Letters to the Robinsons*, No. 3.

³ *Id.*, No. 4.

⁴ Mr. Hugh Pritchard. This drawing, which is a characteristic and striking one, was made a few days after the date of this letter.

⁵ *Robinson Letters*, No. 5.

⁶ *Vigil and Vision*.

On 2 July, 1903, Payne sent Mrs. Robinson¹ the prospectus of *Vigil and Vision*, of the sonnets in which he wrote: "Unless I am utterly incapable of judgment as regards poetry, they are unique since Milton, nevertheless I have been unable to get them published in the ordinary way."

In March 1903 Yacoub Artin Pasha, Secretary of Education at Cairo, published his valuable work *Contribution à l'Etude du Blason en Orient*, illustrated in gold and colours, which he dedicated to Payne, whose copy arrived on 18 March. Artin Pasha and his wife often wrote to Payne, and never visited England without calling on him.²

In September 1903 Payne was shocked to hear of the death of Mrs. Robinson, and on the 9th he wrote to Mr. Robinson the following beautiful letter³:

"My poor friend, I find your sad letter with its terrible tidings on my return from a six weeks' absence in Italy and Switzerland. What a cruel calamity! I, as you know, have passed through the same waters of bitterness and can therefore feel not alone *for* but *with* you in your piteous case. Though twenty years have, in my case, passed, my heart aches with memory. It is useless to attempt to comfort you. Time alone (and your little child) can do that perfectly or imperfectly. I wish I were near you that I could give you that silent hand-grasp of condoling friendship which is the only acceptable token of sympathy in such circumstances. In the sweet soul that is gone before I lose a friend, unseen yet dear. Of course I knew her only from her letters, but they amply showed her brave, sweet, generous nature. . . . At our age (at least such is my experience) most things in life have lost their savour and there is little or nothing left worth thinking of but work and duty; but they are true comforters and to their healing I commend you with all my heart."

In *Vigil and Vision*, which was issued in October, Payne

¹ *Robinson Letters*, No. 6.

² Payne's pencilled notes in my *Life of Sir R. Burton*.

³ *Robinson Letters*, No. 7.

exhibits his continued devotion to Wagner in whose praise are written no fewer than five sonnets; and he pays also a warm tribute to the genius of Liszt, of whom he had written,¹ "Liszt above all is my composer. With his transeendant purity of operation and his interstellar splendour of expression he appeals to my personality more than any other master." Tributes are also paid to Dante, Spenser, Keats, Schopenhauer and other of his enthusiasms. The pathetic "My Lady Dead" is of autobiographic interest. Old friends such as Herman Melville, Mallarmé, Auguste Villiers de l'Isle Adam, De Banville, E. J. W. Gibb,² John Trivett Nettleship³ and others are feelingly commemorated. Of miscellaneous sonnets there are many—one of the finest being the following:

Smetana

All night through the dance and its mazes we swayed:
 The folk murmured round us, I knew not of what;
 A dream was upon me; I heeded them not,
 As I lay in the arms of that loveliest maid.
 The wind of the night in her tresses there played;
 The stars through the casements their rays on us shot,
 As we danced on together, the world all forgot,
 To the music the flutes and the violins made.
 Through orange-groves gleaming with flowerage and fruit
 We floated, we twain, whilst, around and above,
 The horn-notes, that blent with the voice of the flute,
 Still mimicked the moan of the murmurous dove.
 Had the flute-notes not failed and the horns fallen mute,
 We had danced on for ever, myself and my love.

In the sonnet "*Trinitas Anglica*"⁴ he says, "Three names o'er all do glorify our land"—the three being Shakespeare, Dickens and Turner; and he once told me that he preferred Turner's water-colours to the oil paintings.

Bound up with some copies of *Vigil and Vision* is a Supplement consisting of a bitter poem on Gladstone⁵ ("A Burial

¹ In his *Autobiography*.

² Elias John William Gibb, Turkish scholar. He assisted Payne in various ways with the *Arabian Nights*. *Vigil and Vision*, p. 64.

³ He died 31 August, 1902.

⁴ *Vigil and Vision*, p. 65.

⁵ Gladstone died May 1898.

in Westminster Abbey") and twelve sonnets. One of the sonnets is a tribute to Henley, who died 11 July, 1903, and most of the others are tirades against various literary men and musical composers.

Speaking of this book, Payne on one occasion¹ said to me, "It is my finest work altogether," and on another "It is the complete expression of my soul." He lived, however, to write volumes far more splendid. H. H. Furness, the literary critic, who ranked *Vigil and Vision* very high, singled out for special praise the sonnets in the section entitled "Signs and Seasons" and those on Haydn² and Wordsworth.³ "My Lady Dead"⁴ and "The Last of the Gods"⁵ were also favourites with him. "*Re Infecta*"⁶ is another notable sonnet.

To the charge of habitual melancholy Payne in various poems pleads guilty, as in the sonnet "*Ignis Fatuus*"⁷ where he likens his soul to

some pale phantasmal light
That flickers o'er a marsh of mystery,
And with its baleful phosphorescency
Reaches long hands of blue into the night.
It may not give the fair world to men's sight
Not reseue back the lovely things that be
Out of the shrouding gloom.

There is, however, no lack of brightness in Payne's pages. All sunshine and joyous music, for example, are "Major Cadence,"⁸ "Kiss me, Sweetheart,"⁹ "Straight and Swift the Swallows Fly,"¹⁰ "Bells of Gold,"¹¹ "A Birthday Song,"¹² the magnificent "Chaunt Royal of the God of Love,"¹³ "*Trinitas Trinitatum*,"¹⁴ "Indian Isle,"¹⁵ and "Hey for Arcady!"¹⁶ To the exaltation of his latter poems we shall have occasion on a later page to speak. "Payne," observes Mrs. Robinson, "is no misanthrope,

¹ 21 September, 1904.

² Page 35.

³ Page 60.

⁴ *Vigil and Vision*, p. 96.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 104.

⁶ *Id.*, p. 115.

⁷ *Collected Poems*, ii. 168.

⁸ *Id.*, ii. 274.

⁹ *New Poems*, p. 140; *Collected Poems*, ii. 198.

¹⁰ *Collected Poems*, ii. 152.

¹¹ *Id.*, i. 232.

¹² *Id.*, ii. 263; *Songs of Life and Death*, p. 134.

¹³ *New Poems*, p. 10.

¹⁴ *Collected Poems*, ii. 345.

¹⁵ *Id.*, ii. 163.

¹⁶ *Songs of Consolation*, p. 3.

and in certain moods he becomes the spokesman of the people. No reader could look below the surface of 'Shadow-Soul'¹ without realizing that a broad humanity is the essential element underlying all the poems."

Writing on 22 December, 1903,² to Mr. Tracy Robinson, Payne says: "Do you know H. H. Furness, the Shakespearean scholar? If not, you ought to know him; he is as enthusiastic a 'lover of my soul' as yourself. I had a charming letter from him the other day about *Vigil and Vision*. He and dear old Canon Ebsworth³ (a like enthusiast) form with you my special trinity of lovers. The *Songs of Consolation* will, I expect, be ready in about six weeks and I shall send you a copy for the sake of the dozen new poems contained, also a copy of the final sheet of *Vigil and Vision*, containing a Supplement of twelve sonnets de combat, omitted from the issue so as not to mar the gentle harmony of the book, and now privately printed (only twenty copies) for gifts to special friends like yourself."⁴

Although an avowed pessimist, and we shall have more to say by and by on this subject, Payne delighted in the company of cheerful persons, and he had a constant hungering for colour and beauty. He took a delight in seeing accomplished dancing. Of Madame Adeline Genée,⁵ who made her debut in England in *Monte Christo* November 1897, and distinguished herself in *The Dryad*, and in a ballet called "The Dancing Doll" (first performed at the Empire Theatre on 3 January, 1905), he used to speak with great enthusiasm. Her gaiety and laughter impressed him even more than her marvellous technique.

¹ *Songs of Life and Death*, p. 120.

² *Robinson Letters*, No. 9.

³ Vicar of East Retford, Notts.

⁴ He gave one copy to Mrs. Pritchard, one to Mr. Tracy Robinson, and another to me. I do not know what became of the other seventeen.

⁵ See *Modern Dancing and Dancers*, by J. E. Crawford Flitch, 1912.

CHAPTER XII

COMMENCEMENT OF MY FRIENDSHIP WITH PAYNE

1904

JANUARY 1904 was marked by another access of poetry, but before many days had sped Payne was prostrated by illness. In a letter to Mr. Robinson, 26 February, 1904,¹ he says: "I have been quite knocked up by long drawn out domestic miseries [troubles with servants] and have had to make a complete change, which I hope (without much confidence) will give me a little peace in future." The new servants were a man and his wife—Mr. and Mrs. Parsley—a curious coincidence, for if Payne, who was, as we have seen, learned in cookery, had searched the world over, he could not, I suppose, have found persons with a more suitable name. He continues: "As it is I am, in consequence of the extreme suffering this wretched time has entailed on me, a mere neurotic wreck, unfit for any brain work. My (now expected) winter outpouring of verse has been completely checked by it, though it had begun with the very first stroke of the new year, leaving three new lyrics only completed and a mass (nearly thirty) of poems in various stages of unfinish, forming part of the new *Songs in Singing Season*.²

Various obstacles from time to time prevented the American Selection from appearing, and on 14 April, 1904,³ Payne wrote to Tracy Robinson: "I am much concerned for your disappointment in the matter of the Selection, as

¹ *Letters to the Robinsons*, No. 10.

² Title altered to *Songs of Consolation*.

³ *Letters to the Robinsons*, No. 11.

you naturally think before everything of your dear wife's wishes and exertions in the matter. Otherwise it affects me little personally; I am so accustomed to disappointment that it has become a matter of course to me. I feel convinced that no turn in the tide will come while I am alive; after my death *perhaps*. . . . I hope you are well. I myself have been almost prostrate for the last two months and see no chance of improvement. What is the worst is that I can do no work of any kind."

About the middle of the year he issued his *Songs of Consolation*, which consists of thirty-seven poems most of which had appeared either in *Collected Poems* or *The Descent of the Dove*. If the most joyous of its contents is "Hey for Arcady!" the most vivid is "Perfectibility," with its rare colour and its unforgettable phrases. "Litany" contains his oft-repeated maxim

Life's whole beauty is in duty done for duty's sake.

A little later in the same year appeared *Hamid the Luckless*, which is merely a reprint of "Flowers from Syrian Gardens" (*Collected Poems*, i. pp. 322-359) with the difference that No. 2, "The Scavenger of Baghdad," is omitted, "Hamid the Luckless," which gives the title to the book, taking its place. All these poems are founded on tales taken from the *Nights*, with the exception of No. 4, concerning which Payne, writing to me 30 October, 1905, says: "'The Golden Cup' is founded on a well-known anecdote taken, as far as I can recollect, from an Arabic collection called *Anecdotes of the Barmecides*. You will remember that Leigh Hunt made one of his flabby but rather pretty little sentimental poems of it."

In August of the same year commenced my acquaintance with Payne, an acquaintance which speedily ripened into a warm friendship. I was then engaged upon my *Life of Sir Richard Burton*, and, having some knowledge of the connection between Burton and Payne, I searched out Payne's address and wrote to him, soliciting the favour of an interview. He replied on 7 August¹ as follows:

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 1.

"In reply to your letter of yesterday, I regret that the state of my health will not permit of my complying with your request. The completion, in 1901, of my gigantic undertaking of the translation of Hafiz (an undertaking to which that of the *One Thousand and One Nights* was as child's play) left me in a state of prostration from which I shall never recover, and which has (this year especially) become so pronounced as to compel me to live a life of absolute retirement and to decline interviews and correspondence of all kinds. At my age, and after such a life as mine—a life dedicated to the service of the public—and rewarded with nothing but ingratitude and insult, one's only aspiration is to be allowed to end the days of one's martyrdom in privacy and to die in peace. P.S.—As to what it pleases the public to think of the relative merits of my own and Burton's translations, I have long ceased to care a straw.

"Experience has taught me to regard the so-called opinion of the *profanum vulgus*¹ with the profoundest contempt, and I am heartily at one with Renan in believing that an artist can make no more fatal mistake than to endeavour to set himself right with the public by any other means than the dumb witness of his work. As to the rest,

Bid the long contention cease,
Geese are swans and swans are geese.
Let them have it as they will,
Thou art tired, best be still."

On receiving this reply I at once wrote a warm-hearted and thoroughly sympathetic letter. I expressed my admiration for Payne's genius, and after observing that, owing to the success of my *Life of Edward Fitzgerald*² and of my edition of the *Correspondence of William Cowper*,³ I was on the crest of a wave of literary prosperity, I said that it would give me a keen delight to champion his

¹ *Horace*, *Ode* III.

² Two vols., January 1904.

³ Four vols., March 1904.

cause. "If," I concluded, "now you know my feelings, you can grant me an interview, I should be extremely happy. On the other hand, if you are still unwilling to see me, a few sympathetic words will have done you no harm."

On 15 August¹ I received the following reply: "I was much touched by your truly kind letter and your generous desire to take up the cudgels for me. Sympathy such as yours is always grateful, even when, as with me, life has resolved itself into waiting for the end." He said he was going away for a week or two, but hoped after his return to avail himself of my "kind wish" to make his acquaintance. Commenting on this letter, Mrs. Byam said to me, "His big child's heart once touched could not resist you. A real genius never grows old." On 9 September² he wrote and suggested that I should fix a date, and eventually it was settled that I should call on him on 21 September.

I reached his house, 10 Oxford Road, Kilburn, at four o'clock, a house which was to have for me so many pleasant memories. In front of it are three lime-trees. A plump, neat-looking manservant opened the door (it was Parsley) and I was shown into the drawing-room, which consisted of two apartments thrown, by the disuse of folding doors, into one. It was filled with antique and oriental furniture, surrounded with a rich duskiness of colour—for Payne had a gorgeous sense of life—and shelves crowded with books. On all sides were old gold, ebony, lac. I might have been in Persia or Arabia. On each side of the front fireplace stood an Egyptian Arab vase of beaten copper, and on the middle of a table squatted an almond-eyed, porcelain Chinaman who nodded his head, put out his tongue and moved his hands in response to the least vibration. Amid all this oriental ornament and luxury were, odd to say, a certain number of common things that a mechanic would not tolerate in his parlour. A pair of lovely Moorish lamps observed, "We are priceless. Indeed, we are not to be had for money or anything else." Hard by was a paper fan which screamed out, "I was

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 2.

² *Id.*, No. 3.

bought at a Penny Bazaar, and I was dear at a penny." The room was indeed a picture of Payne's mind—Greatness, here and there invaded by littleness.

From the back window which overlooked the garden came scarcely a gleam of light, owing to the encroachments of a luxuriant ampelopsis. Near this window was a piano and a most elaborate and ornate music cabinet; and on a big oak table stood an old Mayflower kettle, so called because of its ornamentation of mayflower petals. Such was the cell. When the anchorite appeared I saw, to my surprise, a comparatively young-looking man, though he had passed sixty-two. He was slight in build, with a peaked beard and heavy dark eyebrows, and looked like an Elizabethan transferred bodily into the twentieth century, his ruff and slashed sleeves lost in transit. He wore dark clothes and an orange tie passed through a gold ring—the gift, as I afterwards learnt, of "Helen"¹—and out of his breast pocket peeped the magenta handkerchief. We were on intimate terms in less time than can be recorded.

After a short chat we descended into the dining-room for tea, and I had no sooner entered than a beautiful dark Angora cat with eyes of jade and a grave appearance pushed its way between the French windows that looked into the garden, crossed the room with soft steps, and climbed on to Payne's neck, settling itself much as if it had been a lady's boa. It afterwards came to my knee and lavished upon me its solemn caresses, and I learnt that its name was Parthy or Partie²—short for Parthenopaeus—(one of the seven who took part in the expedition against Thebes).

A Persian cat that presently made its appearance, entering just as softly, answered to the name of Feridoun.

¹ Mrs. Snee.

² After Partie's death (April 1906) Payne wrote (*Carol and Cadence*, p. 74):

Yet many an hour there is in which I'd fain,
Of all the dear dead, 'neath the clay that moulder,
Feel Rover's fondling head upon my shoulder
Or Partie's paws about my neck again.

And who has not heard of the Persian king of that ilk,
and the verse :

'Twas Feridoun, by Heaven ordained,
Who first the world from vice restrained !¹

I spoke of the garden, but a better name would have been the forest, for although only some twenty yards by ten (I speak quite by guess) it must have contained ten or a dozen trees, which I afterwards learnt were pears, and extraordinary to say, notwithstanding their treatment (or rather lack of treatment) they yielded remarkably well. Looked at from above I judged that not a single inch of the ground could be seen, so completely were the boughs interlaced. Between the "impenetrable forest" and the house were two bay-trees—"the poet's bay," as Payne affectionately called them, and some circular beds containing flowers of the lily kind. "The forest," like the veiled window, was witness of Payne's passion for privacy—which amounted, as already intimated, almost to a disease. 10 Oxford Road, indeed, was not so much a house as a hermitage. Tea with Payne was a solemn and deeply religious function. He was his own blender, and the mixture was composed of the most expensive leaves. Ceylon, he would not look at. Having made the liquor, he poured it backwards and forwards, for some unaccountable reason, into various silver strainers and cups. He spoke quietly. He might have been a magician performing an incantation, or a high priest before some sacred altar. On us the ends of the world were come. I watched him with speechless awe. After tea we returned to the drawing-room, and I detailed my plans concerning the proposed biography of Burton. He then showed me "tall" copies of his own works, which, handsomely bound, were within convenient reach, and told me that most of the bindings were from his own designs.² Our conversation was chiefly on literary

¹ Shah Namah of Fordausi.

² One of green rhododendron leaves on white was designed by Miss Daisy Hutt.

matters, and in the course of these pages I shall give a number of examples of his Table Talk. Montaigne found the practice of conversation¹ more delightful than any other experience in his life, and I certainly consider it one of my greatest privileges that I was able to converse so frequently with a man of Payne's encyclopaedic knowledge, sharpness of wit, scholarship, taste and genius. The greatness of his mind had swept upon me the moment I first heard him speak.

During every interview I took notes whenever possible, and usually before his face, for he made no objection; and I was very careful, immediately after I left, to copy down as much of the remainder of the conversation as I could recollect. I still preserve the original note-books.²

Seated in an easy chair, with his legs crossed and his feet on a hassock, he was good enough to answer the many questions which in my desire to make my book³ as full as possible I ventured to ask him.

I commenced: You and Burton got on very well together?

P. Yes, he had a real regard for me. To look at him you would have taken him for a Chinaman.

T. W. One's looks alter as one gets older.

P. Yes. The soul moulds the features. Young men are ugly, old men handsome.

T. W. What sort of person was Lady Burton?

P. (Speaking rather scornfully) Look at her face. [He referred to the portrait afterwards reproduced at p. 16 of my *Life of Burton*.] That will tell you. What does she look like?

T. W. She was not very diplomatic.

P. She was answerable for most of Burton's troubles. She didn't know the difference between truth and falsehood. She was able to convince herself that what she said was the right thing. She and Burton never understood each other.

T. W. No couple ever did. It would be against nature.

¹ Book III, ch. viii.

² I adopted the same plan in connection with my interviews with Swinburne, Watts-Dunton, and others.

³ On Burton.

P. Still she had a clumsy zeal for Burton's supposed interests. Her devotion to him was a great nuisance, still it was her great redeeming feature. She told me her life would have no interest for her without him.

T. W. In writing my book¹ I want to tell the precise truth, yet to avoid giving pain to anyone.

P. Be guided, then, by the advice of Voltaire: "To the living one owes consideration, and to the dead the truth."

T. W. [Payne having made some remark about the Bible] How splendid are the "Minor Prophets"! Think of the dusky grandeur of Hosea, the sublimity of Nahum! How stimulating are Haggai and Zechariah!

P. Much of their beauty is lost by the habit of connecting them with Christ. They are mad with lyricism.

He then read "Love Solicitous,"² which is founded on the apostle John's "Perfect love casteth out fear,"³ and Ovid's "Love is a state full of anxious fear." "Ovid," he said, "understood the laws and statutes of love better than John did"; but he spoke with enthusiasm of John as a writer, and said "The Book of Revelation is full of the most heavy⁴ poetry." He continued: "But Ovid, what a fine poet he is! You should read Marlowe's translation of his Elegies."

T. W. Dr. William King in his *Political and Literary Anecdotes* says that he could never read Ovid's tale, *Ceyx and Halcyone*⁵ without weeping.

P. Then his feelings must have been very easily worked upon.

T. W. He says further, "I love Ovid."

P. One can admire his writings, but in the man himself there is nothing attractive.

T. W. With the subject of Love you yourself often deal.

P. I hate injustice and cruelty.

¹ *The Life of Sir Richard Burton.*

² *Songs of Consolation*, p. 108.

³ Ov., Her. I. 12. Payne calls him "the Sulmonean Rhapsodist."

⁴ Weighty. Cf. Shakespeare's "a matter of heavy consequence," *All's Well*, ii. 5.

⁵ *Metamorphoses*. See King's *Anecdotes*, p. 30.

T. W. You also use many beautiful words that are not in common use, for example, "zibiline, ensorecelled."

P. Yes "zibiline," the fur of the ermine, is a beautiful word. "Ensorecelled" occurs frequently in Torrens, an early translator of the *Nights*. Some words I hate and never use, "middling,"¹ for example.

Just before I left he gave me copies of his *Songs of Life and Death* and *New Poems* and, at my request, wrote our names in them.²

In his letter of 28 September³ he made some references to one of my volumes of poetry, *The Ivory Coffin*: "I was pleased," he said, "with your verses in their homely old-fashioned style—Goldsmith and Cowper, with an occasional touch of Blake. Defoe ('Doubtful company') and 'When Johnson called'—they and others remind me much of the racy old chapbooks of my boyhood."

On 19 October I visited London chiefly for the purpose of examining the Burton collection in the Public Library at Camberwell, and I seized the opportunity to call again on Payne. He read to me with intense feeling several of his poems, including the magnificent "Prelude to Hafiz."⁴ He evidently felt every word as he read it. I recall the beautiful language, the cadences, the pauses and his habits of twitching his shoulder in enjoyment while reading, and of lingering lovingly on the last syllables of some of the lines. Sometimes he dropped his voice lightly and sometimes, when he forgot himself, his delivery resolved itself into a monotonous swing.

T. W. There is nothing finer in the English language!

P. It is extremely concentrated.

T. W. As to Hafiz's own work, one cannot always grasp the meaning.

P. You must take trouble to understand the gods.

T. W. You are invariably minute and accurate.

P. I always dot my i's and give the exact reference in everything. Hypocrisy is the greatest of crimes.

¹ I was surprised to notice that he used unnecessarily words ending in "st," e.g. "amongst" instead of "among," which is certainly better.

² The rest of the conversation on this occasion is incorporated in the early chapters of this work.

³ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 5.

⁴ *Songs of Consolation*, p. 90.

T. W. How do you know that the spheres laugh ?

P. Poets know everything.

He then read "Barearolle"¹ (The Sailing Song) and "Evensong,"² which is on his favourite subjects of duty, faith, and love ; and talked of his old friends, and particularly of De Banville, of whom he always spoke with affection, and whom he described as "Young-looking, bald, clean shaven, witty and kind."

T. W. You are too much of a recluse.

P. I am a shy bird.

T. W. You are young-looking.

P. I always was. Joaquin Miller once said to me, with the American accent, "I like young men like you, Payne, not old men like Hueffer."³

T. W. You met Watts-Dunton in your younger days ?

P. I knew Watts [he never would say Watts-Dunton] but nobody was to be compared with Swinburne. He outshone everybody.

T. W. What is the great central teaching of your poetry ?

P. The importance of Duty. Duty is my pole star.⁴

T. W. You have no notes to your *Arabian Nights* ? (I was thinking of Burton's method).

P. Notes are unnecessary. There is nothing to explain.

T. W. Are you a Wordsworthian ?

P. I regard appreciation of Wordsworth as the true test of a poet. A real poet must love Wordsworth.

For Payne's further remarks on this poet reference should be made to *Carol and Cadence*, pp. 177 and 265, the Wordsworth sonnet *Vigil and Vision*, p. 60, and the footnote in the Omar Kheyyam, p. 64.

T. W. The *Edinburgh Review* [No. 335, July 1886] praised your *Arabian Nights*.

P. Grudgingly. A critic should possess three requisites :

1. Industry to read a book.
2. Capacity to appreciate it.

¹ *Songs of Consolation*, p. 101.

² *Id.*, p. 127.

³ Franz Hueffer, Madox Brown's son-in-law (1845-1889), who was three years younger than Payne. Apparently he was old in his ways.

⁴ Cf. *Carol and Cadence*, p. 239, and "Litany" in *Songs of Consolation*.

3. Honesty to say the truth about it.

T.W. Do you know who wrote the article?

P. I believe it was Stanley Poole.

T.W. The writer of the short account of the *Nights* which appears in *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*, makes the ignorant remark: "Payne's Translation is complete, but not very accurate." It is a pity the name of the writer is not appended. He ought to be gibbeted.

P. The writer of the article in the *Edinburgh Review* was no friend of mine, but he was evidently an Arabic scholar. He says "Burton is much less accurate than Payne."¹ Still it does not matter what people say. Fact is fact. Yacoub Artin Pasha and Dr. Steingass, both of them distinguished Arabists, were intense admirers of my translation. Another admirer was S. A. Strong, librarian of the House of Lords.

T.W. Dr. Steingass, Burton's friend?

P. Yes, I have some of his letters. I'll give them to you. They will help you in your proposed work. He then looked them out and handed them to me.

Upon my mentioning that I should be glad to refer to the *Edinburgh Review* article, he said, "I have a copy to spare. It is at your service." He then took a flash light and went up into a room at the top of the house to look for it, I following him. After a chat there about the various books which he, or I, removed from the shelves, we returned to the drawing-room, and the conversation drifted on to his translation of Omar Kheyyam and he read to me some of the quatrains.

T.W. I am afraid I don't like the word "skinker" which is used so often. It seems to me inapplicable to a girl with hyacinthine curls of amber-scented hair.² FitzGerald, you know, calls her "Heart's Desire," "Saki, the Cypress-Slender minister of Wine," and other pretty names.

P. Skinker is a good old English word. Both Shakespeare and Massinger use it.³

¹ *Ed. Rev.*, No. 335, p. 180.

² Payne's *Omar Kheyyam*, p. 119.

³ John Lyly uses it in *Mother Bombie*, Act II, Scene 1.

My third interview was on 30 November, my special object being to receive from Payne a packet of forty letters written to him by Burton. After presenting me with copies of his *Hamid the Luckless* and *Intaglios*, in both of which he wrote our names, and also of *Vigil and Vision* and *Songs of Consolation*, he said: "I have been dipping into your *Life of Edward FitzGerald*, and got deeply interested in parts."

T. W. It is a delightful subject.

P. FitzGerald must have been a very difficult person to live with.

When long afterwards I mentioned this remark to Mrs. Byam she said with a smile, "Not nearly so difficult as was my brother himself."

To continue our conversation, I said, "There is a strange charm in some of FitzGerald's quatrains."

P. FitzGerald's *Omar Kheyyam* is a mere *rifacimento* of a few of Kheyyam's verses.

T. W. I know it is only mosaic work, but it is beautiful all the same.

P. It has been absurdly overrated.

He then launched out against the Omar Kheyyam Club¹ ending his tirade with "The FitzGerald Club would be a more suitable name."

T. W. What does it matter? Any excuse for a literary symposium is good enough.

P. Have not, too, many of the references in the Reviews been pitiable? They call the Persian poet Omar. It is just as sensible as to refer to the plays of William, instead of the plays of Shakespeare. Omar corresponds with our christian name. Kheyyam (accent on second syllable) does *not* mean tentmaker.

Reference should here be made to Payne's remarks in his *Omar Kheyyam*, pp. xvii and 18.

P. My translation was financially a great success.

T. W. That speaks well for you. You rise in my estimation. Any fool can write a book, it takes a man of genius to sell one.

¹ See also his remarks in the Preface to his *Omar Kheyyam*, and in *Ibn et Tefrid*, 1st ed., p. 24, q. 74.

As on previous occasions the evening was spent partly in the drawing-room, but we also spent a good deal of time in his study, a snugger at the top of the house which, like the adjoining apartment, was filled from floor to ceiling with books. Here, seated at a writing table provided with a swinging book-holder, similar to those in use at the British Museum, he would converse on all manner of subjects.

I afterwards learnt that I was marvellously privileged to be allowed to enter this holy place. Very few others were ever admitted. To enter it uninvited, was to escape with your life—and only just escape. One day his brother Harry, learning that John was there, had the temerity to walk upstairs and enter. John was at first speechless with anger. Then came the clap of thunder. “How dare you! Go out this instant. Don’t you know that an author’s study is as sacred as a lady’s bedroom!”

It was many days before the wretched Harry dare venture into the house, let alone the sanctuary.

In another room at the top of the house was a joiner’s bench with all kinds of tools, joinery being one of Payne’s recreations.

Dinner with Payne was a rather elaborate function, for he was very much of an epicure. He had quite a library of cookery books, and as I have already noticed he was himself a skilful cook. But what was he not? He was carpenter, chemist, strategist, politician, gardener—to say nothing of musician, translator, scholar and poet. He was everything. I remember particularly one dinner, the principal dish of which was partridges and mushrooms. It was not so much a dinner as a poem—composed by Payne and taken down by Parsley.

On the table was a cruet with seventeen different sorts of sauces. He bade me help myself. In order to veil my ignorance of their qualities, I said I preferred to trust to him. He thereupon “blended” four or five of them as if they were tea, and I must say the result was excellent. He then mentioned the name of each sauce and carefully explained its use, but I am afraid all his erudition was

lost on me. He tried me next with different wines—really, I very rarely drink wine—and as to my uneducated taste they were all pretty much alike I selected one at random. He complimented me on my acumen, and the same brand was always thenceforward placed before me when I dined with him, and invariably alluded to as “your tippie.” I have no doubt it was the “tippie divine” that Omar Kheyyam made so much fuss about, but as I did not want to run the risk of being disillusioned, I asked no questions. We drank out of old long-stemmed Dutch glasses, beautiful both in shape and colour. Certainly the wine was pleasant to taste, but in Payne’s house one could have sworn to a rare and exquisite bouquet even in pure water drunk out of a christening mug of the ugliest Victorian make.

He urged me to help myself to some olives.

P. How do you like them?

T. W. Excellent. Direct from Egypt, I suppose (for I knew that Artin Pasha frequently sent him presents).

P. “No. Spiers and Pond’s. They understand my requirements. I want but little here below, but want that little good.”¹ Of course there was Stilton cheese. No dinner at 10 Oxford Road would have been complete without it.

One evening there resembled another. We usually found ourselves in easy chairs, Payne on the front-window side of the fireplace, with a glass and tobacco on a what-not at his elbow, smoking a cigarette or nervously rolling one, and spreading tobacco all over the room in the operation; and I on the other side with a pyramid of oranges within easy reach.

I spoke of him as “smoking” cigarettes, but it would be more accurate to say that he blew into and made fireworks of them, a habit occasioned by the fact that owing to his unskilfulness in shaping the cigarette, the end would often as not be empty. Sometimes before applying a cigarette to his mouth he put “a bonnet” on it.

While the little Chinaman softly wagged his head,

¹ For Omar Kheyyam’s sentiments on the subject of wanting little see Payne’s *Omar Kheyyam*, p. 181.

and protruded his tongue and moved his hands, and while the fire, made of ship-logs, crackled and sent out tongues of red, yellow, blue and violet flames, caused by the salt, salt-petre and tar with which they were impregnated, and the andirons gleamed, we talked of matters literary—I invariably as the pupil, Payne as master. In respect to the logs, I may say that he always endeavoured to get this kind of firewood. Everything that he did proclaimed the poet. Nothing in his house happened by accident. Everything had been carefully thought out.

The conversation was usually of a placid nature, except when we touched on Politics. At such times Payne would get blood-thirsty, though he invariably ended his tirade against the Liberals and Radicals with a hearty laugh. Without troubling to ascertain what my opinions were he always assumed that they precisely tallied with his own. If I differed openly, it was all the same—I was merely suffering from a momentary aberration or weakness. It would pass. He called himself a Tory Revolutionist. “A revolution,” he said, “is necessary to purge the nation of the puerile stuff forced into it by Democracy, and then,” he added, with a ripple of his unforgettable and very contagious laughter—half guffaw, half titter—and in recollection, I suppose, of his old Bristol exploit, “I should like to shoulder a rifle.” His pet aversions were still Gladstone and Bright, but as they had been dead so long, it seemed to me that it would have been just as reasonable to lose one’s equanimity over Adam or Noah.

“Gladstone and Bismarck,” he said, “are the modern ectypes of Dante’s Judas and Brutus.”

When the weather was inclement he used to say it was because Gladstone had gone aloft.

Sir Wilfred Lawson (temperance advocate and wit) he cruelly alluded to as “that sour old pantaloon.” Now and again I put in a word for these unfortunate politicians who were unable to defend themselves from his truculence, but all in vain. Them, too, he chased into cellars with his unanswerable rifle. He either talked me down, though in the pleasantest manner possible,

or assumed that in my heart of hearts I was really of his opinion.

"At the present day," he went on, "there is a revolt against authority of every kind. Everybody wants to be rich or famous without doing anything for it."

He also severely mauled the musical critics of the day. "When I read them," he said, "I want blood and plenty of it. For So-and-So [unfortunately I omitted to set down the name] no earthly punishment is sufficient. He ought to have eternal torment"—and then, amused by his own vehemence, he burst out into hearty laughter.

His principal grievance against the musical critics was their preference for English composers. It was not because the composers were English that he objected to them, but because of the pooriness of their work. What angered him was the attempt to foist on the world "inferior stuff," as if it were worthy because it was English. He would have been the first to welcome a great English composer. "In art," he once said, "there should be no nationality." Then he added angrily: "But all remonstrance is useless. The gods themselves are powerless against stupidity." His musical preferences and dislikes are nowhere stated more energetically than in the sonnet in the Supplement to *Vigil and Vision*, "On the Newspaper Cry for the exclusive encouragement of Contemporary English Composers." There and elsewhere he is loud in praise of the "tone poems" of Liszt, "the golden horn notes of Schubert,"¹ and of the compositions of Hugh Pierson, Olsen, Smetana, Kistler, Fibich, Heise, Borch, Zöllner, Goldschmidt, Hartmann, Blockx, D'Indy and others. Taylor had possibilities, Elgar now and then could "lure a strain" that's worth remembering, but for "Sullivan and all his crew" he had nothing but unmeasured contempt. He held that music should be "extremely simple or very deep," whereas "Sullivan had pandered to the depraved taste of an ignorant public."

¹ *Vigil and Vision*, p. 46.

In "Populo" (*Carol and Cadence*, p. 223) he falls upon those

Who suffered Schubert starve and passing Berlioz by,
The feet of Auber kissed,
Tchaikowsky, Dvorak, Brahms, applauded to the sky
And scorned the name of Liszt.

In *Vigil and Vision* he pays warm and eloquent tributes to Haydn, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, Merkel, and J. P. E. Hartmann and speaks contemptuously of Tchaikowsky, "dreary Dvorak," Brahms and Sullivan. In a footnote to the Introduction to the *Omar Kheyyam*, (of all places!) and in *Humoristica* (first series)¹ he also savagely attacks Tchaikowsky and Brahms.

He knew Gounod, Liszt and Wagner personally, having met them in France and Germany.

In his *Autobiography*² he says: "Wagner music has always been as much and as essential a part of my life as literature. Although all but untaught (I had only a few months' teaching on the violin when a lad) and brought up amongst unmusical³ people, I have a species of innate gift for music, which enables me to judge and appreciate the strangest and most unconventional compositions and to reproduce upon the piano (without a previous hearing) the most complicated orchestral and other works. 'But for music,' as Disraeli says, in one of those flashes of wit and wisdom which shine like diamonds in the vast rubbish heap of his novels, 'we might almost say the Beautiful, i.e. the *formally*, externally Beautiful, is dead,'⁴ and, indeed, I hardly know how I could have borne the burden of my life without it.⁵ I cannot but feel that my love and practice of music are to be traced everywhere in my verses, in which it seems to me that it is impossible for any insight to mistake the hand of the student of melodic expression and above

¹ Page 11.

² Page 21.

³ He is here hardly fair to his mother and Mrs. Pritchard.

⁴ See, too, Payne's sonnet *Vigil and Vision*, p. 35 top line.

⁵ Cf. Musicke (a mithridat for melancholy), John Lyly, *Mydas*, Act IV, Scene 4.

all of orchestral harmonies, and that the technique of the latter especially and inevitably suggests the familiar use and knowledge of music in its subtlest and most recondite forms, if, indeed, it may not at times be accused of encroaching too far upon the limits of the sister art. Berlioz,¹ by the way, is and has always been, quite as dear to me as Wagner, and he has the advantage over the latter of being the precursor. His 'Symphonie Fantastique,' produced in 1830, is still the unsurpassed type of romantic music, as it was the first great example;² but Liszt above all is my composer; with his transcendent purity of aspiration (the nostalgia of another and a nobler world—his mystic spirit-harmonies) and his interstellar splendour of expression—he appeals more to my personality than any other master, although I love and appreciate many and many another, including many who are practically unknown in England." Elsewhere he sums up his admiration for Berlioz, Wagner and Liszt by calling them "The Thunderers Three."

We have seen how fiercely Payne attacked the composers who offended him. There were degrees, however, in his fury. When not entirely displeased he merely called them "cheap idols," or "adulterous blots."

During my third interview with Payne we also conversed on the subject of France. Payne loved France, but could see no future for her. "She is destined," he said, sorrowfully, "to be split up into four. Germany will seize the eastern departments, England will take Normandy, and the rest will form two minor states." This, it must be remembered, was in 1904—that is, ten years before the commencement of the Great War.³ For Turkey, too, he had an inordinate affection. "The Turks," he alleged, "would be a great people if they were adequately led.⁴ They are among the best common soldiers in the world. They are equalled only by the English."

As Payne was an accomplished Italian scholar, and as

¹ See sonnet on Berlioz's *Faust*, *Vigil and Vision*, p. 45.

² See, too, *Flowers of France, Romantic Period*, vol ii. p. 160, footnote, and *Vigil and Vision*, p. 43.

³ The conclusion of which, unhappily, he did not live to see.

⁴ General Byam agreed with him.

I had a few days previous been reading Fairfax's *Tasso* and Rose's *Ariosto*, I desired his opinion on some of the south European poets. "Fairfax's *Tasso*," he said, "is better than the original. Tasso, however, shines brightest not in his *Jerusalem* but in his *Aminta* and the sonnets. The poetry of both Tasso and Ariosto is inferior to that of Boccaccio, but Camoens, the Portuguese poet, is above them all. Dante and Leopardi¹ are the only poets of Italy. Of the three portions of the *Divine Comedy* I prefer the Purgatory. Longfellow's translation is better than Cary's."

"It may be truer to the original," I said, "but it is certainly less readable."

He expressed some surprise that I could not enjoy Balzac, but admitted that Balzac has too much of Paris, just as Dickens has too much of London. "Dickens," he said, "is the second English writer. He comes next to Shakespeare. We go to Dickens for pathos as well as for humour."

I said I could not agree with him, and insisted that Dickens was a humorist pure and simple, and nothing more.

He went on: "Humour is the salt of life. A man who has it can face the world without fear. It is wit and love combined. The difference between Dickens and Thackeray is that Dickens laughs *with* people, Thackeray laughs *at* people. *Martin Chuzzlewit*² is Dickens's greatest book. Thackeray is a notable figure, all the same. There is real power in the man, but he disgusts me. His idea of fun is other people's misery. He wrote only one book, *Vanity Fair*." Payne's admiration for Dickens is expressed in several of his poems, notably "Trinitas Anglica."³

He called George Macdonald "a great romancer," praising particularly *Alex Forbes of Howglen*, but he was unjust to R. L. Stevenson, whom he defined

¹ For Payne's translation of Leopardi's "Chorus of the Dead," see *Collected Poems*, ii. 383. He once planned the translation of the whole of Leopardi.

² Reference to Captain Swosser in *Vigil and Vision*, p. 128.

³ *Vigil and Vision*, p. 65.

as "a plagiarist built up of Daniel Defoe and Captain Marryat."

Portions of Payne's *Autobiography* form a new and extraordinary *Dunciad*, but of course it does not follow that every person included in it is necessarily the contemptible personage that Payne considered him. We think none the worse of the charming Puritan poet George Withers because Pope, in a distempered moment, put him in the eighteenth century *Dunciad*, nor of Daniel Defoe because it is written of him, "Earless on high stood unabashed Defoe."

On p. 5 of the *Autobiography* we read: "It is the younger generation, men of my own standing, such as *****,¹ Lang,² and others who are jealous of me, and who, having obtained complete control over the press, contrive to keep my name and work not only from receiving its due recognition, but even from coming to the knowledge of the public. It is, I imagine, little known in America how completely corrupt is the contemporary English literary press,³ which is altogether worked by a rigorous combine of two or three cliques, the members of which employ their powers solely for the glorification of themselves and their fellow-riggers of the market, and the crushing out of notice of all who do not belong to their gang, this scalting into temporary and purely factitious notoriety a number of fourth-class *littérateurs*,⁴ such as *****, Lang, *****, *****, *****, ~~Watson~~, *****, Phillips,⁵ Stevenson, Grant Allen and others of whom it is safe to predict that scarcely a line will be extant fifty years hence."

In a subsequent page he speaks of "mere handicraftsmen like *****, Lang and *****."

Solomon is credited with having said, "There is no new thing under the sun." We are told that in the old *Dunciad* somebody else's "wooden head" originally occupied the place into which the great Daniel's was

¹ A very well known man of letters.

² Andrew Lang.

³ This was written in 1902.

⁴ Very well known men of letters alive to-day.

⁵ Stephen Phillips.

afterwards thrust; and in the new *Dunciad* lo, a Watson gives place to a *****! Payne evidently gave Watson's poems a second reading, and decided that their author was too good for the niche.

To the verse writers among the gibbeted Nine he gave the name of the "Poets of the Deliquescence"—a chemical term, by which he meant that they were nearly all water. I have often heard him speak contemptuously of the age of *****, Stevenson and Lang, and he once favoured me with what he called the "Tenth Beatitude": "Blessed" are the poor in technique, for they shall see ***** and find favour with Lang and *****." Could bitterness go further!

Lastly in the letters to Tracy Robinson we have reference to "smart journalists like Lang and *****, whose popularity is the result of unscrupulous advertisement and press manipulation."

When, indeed, on the subject of the Nine, Payne was a veritable Devil-among-the-Tailors. In none of them would he ever see anything good, any more than he would see good in Bright and Gladstone. He used to say "The Logrollers and Pressnobblers of to-day are, like Rabeiais' monks, banded together to deceive and hoodwink the world."

Against those of the Nine who had the misfortune to be of Scottish descent he was particularly biassed. One day in conversation with me, the name of Mr. T. W. H. Crosland having occurred, he said: "He has written one smart book, *The Unspeakable Scot*." Anything, indeed, hurled at the Keltic Fringe gave him almost childish pleasure. In his "Ode to the East Wind," he draws the attention of that Fiend of Air towards the politicians and logrollers that have invaded England, and addressing him says:

Out upon them, pour thy fury
Back to Youghal, Cork and Newry,
Cardiff, drive them with thy daggers,
Swansea, Aberdeen and Fife.

It must not be supposed, however, that the Nine were

the only authors whom he castigated. In *Humoristica* (2nd Series, 1909), "Poorjohn"¹ Morley, James Bryce, and George Meredith (whose books are ridiculed again and again) are labelled first as "two bores and a banterer,"² and then as "two doctrinaire drones and a cramp jargoncer," and there is a reference to Morley's "flavourless personality,"³ but it is evident that it is the Radical tendencies of these men that give offence, rather than their shortcomings as authors. ***** is dismissed as a "cheap second-hand Oscar Wilde." For Sir Oliver Lodge Payne had a sincere respect, and he asks sorrowfully how it came about that Lodge cast his "hat in this circus."

Other authors upon whom he poured scorn were Coventry Patmore, Martin Tupper, Sir Edwin Arnold and Sir Lewis Morris whom he placed on a level with the poetasters of the *Ecole du Bons Sens* in France.⁴

Reference has already been made to Dr. Nix, a friend of Payne's younger days, and to his matter of fact manner. When Dr. Nix married and settled in Weymouth Street, Payne was a frequent visitor at his house—he always spent his Sunday evenings there—and he made pets of the children.

One day Dr. Nix said to Payne, "Where *did* you get all your information from?" just as one might ask, "Do you get your cheese from Spiers and Pond's or from the local tradesman?"

Payne replied, "By reading novels and looking in shop-windows." But the answer was not altogether ironical. To both these practices Payne was inordinately addicted. Drapers' shops particularly attracted him, owing to their display of colour; and I think it was also because the names of the materials sometimes enabled him to add to his vocabulary, which, vast as it was, he constantly endeavoured to enlarge; but of course I may be wrong in this assumption.

He read a novel a day. Of his respect for George

¹ A cheap fish.

² A banterer is defined by Anthony Wood (seventeenth century) as "one who talks floridly nonsense."

³ 2nd Series, p. 31.

⁴ See the *Heine*, vol i. p. 311 footnote.

Macdonald we have already spoken. He was also partial to the works of Cicely Sidgwick, Louis Tracy, and Harold Bindloss. A special favourite with him was *An Imaginative Man*, by Robert Hichens. By the books of C. A. Collins (Dickens's son-in-law) he was strangely fascinated, and in conversation with me he often referred to them, praising particularly *A Cruise upon Wheels*, *A New Sentimental Journey* and the *Bar Sinister*. There is a sonnet to Collins in *Carol and Cadence*.¹

On 14 December, 1904, I put before him a literary scheme which I felt convinced would be to his advantage, and I offered if he would give me a letter of authority to take at once the steps which would ensure its success. Writing on 30 December,² he said: "I am feeling a little better and take advantage of the improvement to answer your most kind and sympathetic letter of the 14th. I have been, no doubt partly by my own fault, a lonely man all my life, and have neither received nor expected sympathy nor appreciation; but the want of them has much saddened those hours of depression which come but too often to the high-strung nerve-dominated servant of the Spirit, and this makes such spontaneous affection and sympathy as yours doubly welcome to me. I accept with pleasure your kind offer, and enclose you such a letter of authority as you suggest."

I had also urged him to set to work upon some new great translation, and he goes on: "As to a new translation³ I have such an one in my thought and I should be only too glad to be able to work at it; but, until the hermetic moment (as the old alchemists had it) comes, it is only endeavour wasted to attempt it."

¹ Page 174.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 12.

³ Apparently the *Heine*.

CHAPTER XIII

THE YEAR 1905

IN January 1905 there appeared in the *Quarterly Review* an appreciative article on my edition of the *Correspondence of William Cowper*,¹ and Payne, on 23 January,² wrote to congratulate me. He urged me to study North's *Plutarch*, and afterwards lent me his copy of the edition issued in 1603. "Langhorne's," he added, "is poor flat stuff." Among those to whom I applied for information respecting Burton was Swinburne, from whom I heard on 31 January, 1905, and whose personal acquaintance I subsequently made.

In a letter of 8 February³ Payne gives his opinion of portions of my *Life of Sir Richard Burton*, the MS. of which I had submitted to him. He says: "I am much pleased with the general style and manner of them. They are soberly and pleasantly written, interesting without strain, and will, I think, be acceptable to the (literary) just and unjust. Your condemnation of Burton's and Lady Burton's looseness of statement (to use a mild phrase) is sure to raise a storm."⁴

On 21 February Payne returned some later chapters of the MS. and observed⁵: "I quite approve of your treatment of *The Scented Garden* and do not see how it can reasonably give offence. In these matters *est modus in rebus*.⁶ Anything can be said by him who knows the value of words. The great secret is to avoid the use

¹ Four vols. 1904.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 13.

³ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 14.

⁴ Which it did.

⁵ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 16.

⁶ *Horace*: "There is a mean in morals."

of 'unpopular words,' such, for instance, as 'bawdy,' a word which I detest, and which always seems to leave an offensive smell behind it."

In the meantime I had been endeavouring with the assistance of Mr. John Casey and other admirers of Payne's poetry and prose works to found a John Payne Society. When I communicated my project to Payne he wrote, 10 March, 1905,¹: "As to the J. P. Society idea, it is, as you suggest, somewhat of a shock to me, to whom loneliness and retirement have become a second nature, but believe me, nevertheless, I appreciate and admire, as fully as can be, your energetic sympathy and kindness, and cannot allow my own nervous horror of publicity to stand in your way. Indeed, I think the idea is a thoroughly good one so long as I am not personally called upon to take any part in carrying it out, and shall be pleased to discuss it with you when I see you next month." He mentioned that he had been busy with a volume of French verse translations, of which "perhaps a fifth is done." This is the work which was published the following year with the title *Flowers of France, Romantic Period*.

On 31 March, 1905, he wrote to me concerning Burton's use of the word "egromancy." He says: "As I imagined, the word is a corruption of a corruption, and I should not myself think of using it. Negromancy is itself an ignorant corruption (by some one who knew no Greek) of the correct necromancy. . . . Altogether the corrupted word is not fit for decent (etymological) society."

In a letter of 6 April, 1905,² he says, after referring to the special scheme upon which I was just then embarking in his interests: "I am quite willing to make any reasonable modifications in the terms [offered to a publisher] if you should think them too exacting. Of course, you know, were my personal feelings to be the only criterion, they would lead me to let the whole thing slide, in the assurance that no measure of justice will fall to my share till death has removed the crucial obstacle—my personal existence. But I will not raise any obstacle

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 19.

² *Id.*, No. 21.

to your doing as you so kindly wish in my interest." Later, in conversation, he said, "You know you made me do it" [that is, induced him to consent to the scheme] "but I know it is my duty."

On 7 April I replied to Payne as follows (and this and two others are the only letters of mine to him of which I kept copies):

"I received your welcome letter and shall now be able to go forward armed *cap-à-pie*. But with the latter half of it I entirely disagree. Complete justice will be done to you in a little while. Edward FitzGerald did splendid work, but to this day nobody would have known anything about it but for the clamour of a few men who were in deadly earnest. The public has no animus against you. It is simply incapable of seeing merit anywhere until the thing is in season and out of season drummed into it. Now this is the task that I have set myself respecting you. All I say is wait and see what devoted love and untiring energy can do for you. When we meet I want to hear your opinion about Stendhal—if you are interested in him—and also about Ariosto, Tasso and other French and Italian classics. You are not old. I look upon myself as a boy yet; and if you and I were to be photographed together people would say that you look the younger of the two. In May I shall be forty-six."

On 2 May the John Payne Society was founded, its first president being Sir Edward Charles Ross, who was succeeded by the present president, Sir John Cockburn.

On 11 May Payne presented me with a copy of his *Collected Poems* and made suggestions respecting a volume of selections—to be entitled *Sir Winfrith and other Poems*, which the Society proposed to issue.

On one occasion when I called on Payne I pointed out to him that his poems suffered owing to the scarcity of footnotes.

He said, "I do not write for the 'uncooked.'"¹

T. W. But it is to this same "uncooked" that I am

¹ An Omar Kheyyam expression. It means the ordinary people. Cf. Quatrain No. 624, Payne's version. See also "Pars Poetæ," *Vigil and Vision*, p. 57.

endeavouring to introduce you. I want to lift them above themselves, just as you have lifted me above myself. You won't mind my putting footnotes—giving, for example, the meaning of such unusual words as “wandesire,”¹ “lurdane,”² etc.

P. Do as you like, by all means.

He sometimes referred to the public as “the unthinking multitude,”³ “the bisson multitude”⁴ (a Shakespearean expression, e.g. Cor. ii. 1), “the rude vulgar,” “the canaille,” those who are incapable of conceiving an abstract idea, the *rohen Leute*⁵ of Schopenhauer. When particularly angry with the public he bludgeoned them with Horatian term *servum pecus*.⁶

I once said to him “Perhaps it's as well you did not use footnotes. The probability is that if you had to explain the meaning of ‘zibiline’ or ‘wandesire’ you would have felt yourself justified in using the opportunity to give a passing cut at Mr. Gladstone or Mr. *****.”

“Which of your poems,” I then asked, “are most likely to please the public?”

“I don't know,” he replied, “choose what you like.”

In his *Autobiography* he observes: “Too much by far has been made by the critics of my use of archaic words. The question, however, is that of the *mot propre*, and the test is, Can a better word be substituted?” He contends that in his poems the word used “whether old or new is in general the only one apt to give the exact shade of meaning under the existing circumstances of rhyme and rhythm.”⁷ He concludes with the observation: “But the whole thing is only the eternal, wearisome iteration of the old grievance of the routine-loving dullard against the man of imagination and invention.”

He sometimes spoke of the “Ten Intellects,”⁸ and he always put Imagination and Intuition first.

In a letter to Payne written early in May, I had observed in respect to my endeavours to increase the membership

¹ Despair.

² A dull fellow.

³ *Vigil and Vision*, p. 66.

⁴ See *Omar Kheyyam*, p. xxxvi.

⁵ Raw people.

⁶ “A slavish body” of imitators, worshippers of rank and fashion. Ep. i. 19. See also his *Omar Kheyyam*, p. 97 and p. 200 and 823 note.

⁷ *Autobiography*, p. 8.

⁸ See his *Omar Kheyyam*, p. 38.

of the Society, that few persons seemed to have heard of him ; and I expressed my amazement. He observed, 11 May, 1905¹:

"I am not surprised at your finding me unknown to most people. Most of my acquaintance and even friends are unaware of my writings and (if they *do* know them) they manage to dissemble the fact with marvellous skill—and, as you may imagine, I am the last person in the world to take any steps to enlighten them. 'I'd rather be a dog and bay the moon,' than endeavour in any way to buy the 'voices, the most sweet voices' of the profane. 'You banish me!—I banish *you*,' say I with Coriolanus to the *servum pecus*. But I need not say all that does not affect, nay, it strengthens my love and gratitude to such elect few as yourself whatever the issue."

A little later *Sir Winfrith* was in the hands of the members. The Society gave Payne great pleasure, though his shyness prevented him from being present at any of the meetings, and he was often cheered by the enthusiastic messages which were from time to time sent to him by its members.

On 27 May² he wrote in order to answer many questions which I asked him in respect to passages in Burton's letters.

In a postscript he refers to some of the difficulties which had presented themselves in my endeavours to popularize his poetry. He said: "Why worry yourself about it? You know my ideas upon the subject. I am quite content to leave it till after my death, when, as usual, the world will discover the dead dog to have been a lion. *Dicunt. Quid dicunt? Dicunto.*"

After the word "lion" is an asterisk, and on the other way of the paper he wrote, an asterisk preceding: "At least I think so. I may be mistaken. Anyhow I don't care now. It's too late. Let them have it as they will."

"No," I said to him afterwards, "they shan't have it as they will."

It was now decided by the John Payne Society to issue another volume, assuming Payne's consent could be obtained—a volume of selections from the shorter tales

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 22.

² *Id.*, No. 24.

of the *Nights*. He readily gave the required permission and made the selection himself—sending the list to me in a letter of 17 July, 1905.¹

My next step was to write to Watts-Dunton in order to ask him to take the chair at the forthcoming first meeting of the Society. I regarded him as the first literary critic of the day, and for his essays, especially that on Congreve, I had and still have a profound admiration.

He replied on 1 June: "I am delighted to learn that there is a John Payne Society, for I have often railed in a very savage way against a 'literary world' like ours at the present time which seems scarcely conscious of the existence of one of our finest poets."

After expressing his regret that he was unable to take the chair he was good enough to continue: "Let me say in conclusion that it gives me great pleasure to be brought into communication with you who have written so admirably upon subjects that interest me deeply. Should you when next in London be able to call upon me you will give me great pleasure."²

On 28 June I duly presented myself at the Pines, stayed to tea, and spent the evening with him. I need not describe the Rossetti and gypsy atmosphere of Watts-Dunton's room, the Chinese cabinets bright with lacquer work, the portraits of Madox Brown and others of the Fitzroy Square circle, the pictures illustrative of Watts-Dunton's novel *Aylwyn*, the bewilderingly carved chairs or the garden with a statue in the distance—for others have minutely described them before me. The conversation presently drifted to the subject of Payne.

Watts-Dunton said: "Young men come here and talk about this poet and that poet, and I say to them, 'Why the devil don't you talk about Payne!'

"'Payne! Payne!' they say.

"'Yes, Payne, he's a jolly sight better poet than you are.'"

Sir Richard Burton's name being introduced Watts-Dunton said: "Burton's book on the Gypsies is full

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 27.

² *Letters of Watts-Dunton to T. W.*, No. 1.

of errors, and that's a subject I do know something about. Burton's conversation was so Rabelaisian that servants did not like to wait upon him. Lady Burton was vulgar. She was always talking in a patronizing way about the 'middle classes.' She lowered Burton."

"But," I said, "Swinburne has praised Burton, even extravagantly."

"Swinburne is a good fellow," replied Watts-Dunton, "but he is no judge of character."

Watts-Dunton agreed with me that Burton, distinguished as he was as a traveller and linguist, has no standing whatever as a writer.

The rest of the conversation I omit, as it had no connection with Payne or Payne's circle. Watts-Dunton invited me to go to see him whenever I was in town, consequently from time to time I gave myself the pleasure of calling and spending an hour or two with him, and many letters passed between us.

On 30 June, when I was again at 10 Oxford Road—Parsley, as usual, admitting me—I told Payne how Watts-Dunton had eulogized him. He said: "If Watts [he never would, out of detestation of double-barrelled names, say Watts-Dunton] is so ardent an admirer of my poetry why does he not say so in the literary periodicals?"

The subject of double-barrelled names having come up, I said: "What does it matter? If I had one I should not alter it, but I do not covet one." Then seeing that this was merely holding up a red rag to a bull, I deftly changed the conversation by asking a question about Gautier, which I knew was a very safe venture.

"Gautier," he said, "was the greatest man of letters that France has produced. "Goethe wrote a great deal of poor stuff. Everything that Gautier wrote is good. His *Histoire de l'Art Dramatique*, a very great work, is full of purple passages.¹ *Captain Fracasse* and *La Mort d'Amoureuse* are also very great works. In short, only tap Gautier and the pure wine of art and philosophy

¹ There is a long citation from this work in Payne's Introduction to *Omar Kheyyam*, p. lvii.

will come from him. How rich is his vocabulary! The French have never given him his due."

I said that Gibbon's idea of history—a series of tableaux—seemed to me the most acceptable one, although I was also an ardent admirer of Carlyle, who gives us smaller pictures—vignettes."

"They are flash-light pictures," said Payne. "Carlyle was a giant, but too conceited. Ruskin, who has nothing like the elemental greatness of Carlyle, is to be praised on account of his general poetic excitation of the imagination. He, too, worked for righteousness."

I expressed my admiration for Oscar Wilde's *Essays*, mentioning in particular *The True Function and Value of Criticism*¹ which first appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* for 1890, but Payne, who was most unjust to Wilde, would not hear a word in his favour either as a writer or as a wit.

I mentioned several of Wilde's repartees—his reply, for example, to Pater, who, after lecturing in a very low voice, said to Wilde: "Could you hear me?" "We overheard you," said Wilde. "That *bon mot*," insisted Payne, "was taken from somebody else." "I met Wilde several times," Payne went on, "and I remember observing after one of his witticisms, 'That's a scorcher!' meaning that although uttered as original it was a well-known joke. However, he was a good conversationalist. Hichens' story *The Green Carnation* is an exact transcript of his (Esmé Amaranth's) talk. It is a most brilliant crystallization of his affectations and personality generally. Wilde never attitudinized with me. I saw the better side of him. He was a coarse, tall, Chadband-looking man with great flabby cheeks. With his long hair and tallowy complexion he looked like a ranter. He and Gladstone are the two arch nuisances of the nineteenth century. Such men are temporary gods in temporary niches."²

"Wilde," said I, "never walked. He would hire a cab to cross the road."

"I once," commented Payne, "walked with him five

¹ *The Critic as Artist*.

² Cf. *Carol and Cadence*, p. 214.

miles near Walton-on-Thames when I was visiting Lewis [afterwards Sir George Lewis], so he did sometimes use his legs."

Among Payne's books was a copy of *Dorian Gray*, inscribed: "To John Payne, an artist in Literature, from the Author, in admiration and regard. May '91."

Payne was even more severe on Whistler, who, he said, "would soon be forgotten"—adding: "He was a man who had possibilities in certain directions. He doesn't rely on his work for success, but on his tricks. That I detest. Everything with him is a matter of extravaganees."

I asked him whence he had chiefly drawn his own inspiration, and he said: "From the Authorized Version of the Bible, Edmund Spenser and North's *Plutarch*, I am never weary of reading the Dictionary, and I should like my epitaph to be *Linguam Anglicam Amavit*—'He loved the English tongue.'"

We then talked of beautiful words. "It is curious," he remarked, "what delightful words—names of flowers, for instance—have been formed from ugly originals—generally the names of persons who introduced the plants into this country—as, for example, fuchsia, dahlia, zinnia—from the hideous Fuchs, Dahl, and Zinn." Curious to say, though he himself was so great a lover of flowers, he would never have them in the room. No one ever saw a cut-flower in his house.

He praised Cassell's *Encyclopædic Dictionary*, and I told him I was glad, for I should like my own copy all the better. He then urged me to get the Supplement as well. I found, however, that he was constantly hankering after Murray's great *Oxford Dictionary*, and a few years later he procured all the volumes that had appeared.

He then spoke of his friendship with Burne-Jones,¹ and expressed surprise, considering the closeness of that friendship, that his own name was only casually mentioned

¹ Five letters of Burne-Jones to Payne (1896-8) were sold at Sotheby's, 29 June, 1916.

in the biography¹ which had appeared in the preceding December (1904).

Payne was no adept at putting his wares before the public in an attractive form (I refer to his original works), and when other persons showed themselves equally wanting under this head he never noticed it. For example, the chapters in the *Memorials of Ed. Burne-Jones* are headed thus: "Chapter 1, 1833-1844. Chapter 2, 1844-1848," and so on. "What a bald appearance," I said, "what a lazy way of issuing a book! Every chapter could easily have had an attractive heading!"

"I don't see that it could be bettered," said Payne. "It's sufficient."

Being neurasthenic Payne avoided anything that might cause undue excitement. At first I did not understand this characteristic (not being, myself, over-sensitive), and on one occasion having mentioned a recent attack made upon him, I proceeded to read it aloud. He begged me to desist. "I don't want to hear it," he said, "I never read such things. The Press has treated me shamefully."

T. W. How can a man know that he is a prophet if he is not stoned?

In a letter of 21 July, 1905,² he calls Leconte de Lisle "the greatest poet of the century," and he speaks of still being busy with his *Flowers of France*.

In the same letter he speaks of what he called the "Lancites" passage in my *Life of Sir Richard Burton*. "No one," he said, "can object to it, least of all myself, whose first object is, as you know, to be just even to those who spitefully use me, and in whose disposition there is no place for hate or permanent rancour. Still, for the sake of future genius, in its struggle against interested jealousy and stupidity, the meanness of the motives by which the clique was actuated should be plainly put before the public. *Judea*, as you know, *damnatur cum nocens absolvitur*.³

¹ *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, by G. B. J. (Lady Burne-Jones).

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 28.

³ "When a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is convicted."

"The only other thing I could suggest is that I should like you, if you find it possible, to add a paragraph or two emphasizing my original reluctance, when first approached by you, in any way to enter the lists as against Burton. You might quote the words of my first letters to you. But do just as you like. It does not matter greatly."

Early in July I asked him to let me write a short account of him for *Who's Who*; for as secretary of the John Payne Society it was an inconvenience to me to keep coming upon educated persons who had never heard of him.

He wrote on 7 July, 1905¹: "I will think over your suggestion re *Who's Who*. At present I don't like it, but we will see what consideration brings forth. If you refer to *Men of the Times* for 1884 you will find a paragraph about me"; and then he says amusingly: "But Washington Moon,² the Baby-linen man (Mme. Elise) coming into the editorship, struck my name out, and it has not appeared in any subsequent editions. One, I suppose, of the many (unknown) enemies whom my mere existence seems to raise up against me on every hand!"

Finally he decided against my request, consequently his name has never appeared in *Who's Who*. He used also to say that he had never been interviewed.

On 10 August Swinburne³ gave me permission to use in my *Life of Burton* his verses on the Death of Richard Burton.

On 12 August (1905) was held at Margery Hall, Forest Gate, the first meeting of the John Payne Society. Messages sympathizing with its objects were read from the Earl of Crewe, Swinburne, Watts-Dunton and Dr. Garnett; papers were read by Mr. John Casey and Mr. W. F. Kirby, and some of Payne's poems were recited.

On Tuesday, 15 August, I spent another pleasant evening with Payne. We had tea in the garden under the bay-trees, and he gave me some notes for the present work, for I had already commenced, with his approval,

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 29.

² Washington Moon, the grammarian. As a young man I had a good deal of correspondence with him, and I was much indebted to him.

³ *Letters of Watts-Dunton to T. W.*, No. 3.

to write a biography of him. A little later he sent me a very large amount of material for the same purpose, including the *Autobiography* in his own handwriting, already several times cited in these pages.

Along the north side of his garden the zinnias were in bloom, and their crimson, rose, buff, orange, fawn coloured and vivid yellow discs made a gay scene. The small circular beds were bright with the *lilium auratum* and the *speciosum rubrum*.

"You love zinnias," I said.

"Yes," he replied. "They are the flowers of surprises."

The conversation then drifted to literature.

"John Addington Symonds," he said, "was one of the greatest sciolists who ever lived. He had only a smattering of anything."

As I was at this time collecting materials for a biography of Walter Pater, I naturally wanted Payne's opinion of that writer.

"Pater," he said, "compares unfavourably with Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer says in a few words what Pater takes a whole book to say."

With some hesitation I asked him to write for my book a sonnet on Pater, but he excused himself. The truth is he despised Pater, just as he despised FitzGerald. He had no patience with "niggling writers" and workers in mosaic. I think he was unfair to them. Every man must work as God permits. Certainly there is no spontaneity in such writers as Gray, Rossetti, Pater and FitzGerald, but there is in each a virtue, a bouquet—a formula (as Pater would have said) the loss of which would have rendered literature the poorer.

In Vol. 1, Chapter 28, of my *Life of Pater* which I submitted to Payne, I observe: "Pater, following Sainte Beuve, finds that the virtue or active principle in Du Bellay is his proclivity to portray 'his own most intimate moods.'"

Payne pencilled in the margin, "Is not this the active virtue of *every* lyrical poet? It seems to me a very shallow characterization."

I said further in this chapter: "Pater's article gives

an entirely erroneous impression of its subject, for we might judge from it that Du Bellay's verses (and he calls Du Bellay 'almost the poet of one poem') are little more than thistle-down—light, pretty, silvery things that blow about." In the margin Payne pencilled, "Pater's acquaintance with Du Bellay was (like that of most people) probably confined to the reading of the 'Winnower's Song' as quoted in Sainte Beuve's well-known *Tableau de la Poésie Française au Seizième Siècle*. Du Bellay was doubtless for Pater, as for others who have not really studied the subject, 'the poet of one poem!'"

A reference to Pater's "Apollo in Picardy" led Payne to say: "I object to his method. You should never give the reasons for your judgments. Pater's roots do not strike deep enough. He was a sciolist to an extent. It is true he had a genuine love for delicate perfection, but he was too lazy to go into the tremendous work of making himself perfect in any way—of getting to the foundation of the whole thing. There is an Arab saying 'The confession of ignorance is the beginning of knowledge.' In order to grow beautiful flowers you must dig up the ground. Pater had neither the patience nor the energy. However, he had a genuine sense of the magic of Plato."

T. W. The great secret is intuition.

P. Intuition is everything. Keats had very little knowledge. What does it matter? There is more Greek feeling in Keats than in Landor, who was a great scholar. There is a stiffness and coldness about Landor. Tennyson is a pure materialist. All that is good in Clough is developed in Arnold.

Something then led him to speak of the church bell-ringing nuisance. Like most students he hated bells.

T. W. We are worse off in the country, for we have the change ringers. They come to a town and pull for their very lives for five hours on end, and then boast in the local press how many million bob majors, or whatever they call them, they have inflicted upon us. The sounds of nature, on the other hand, are delightful. Cowper said he liked to hear a goose on a common, though he would

not care to listen to one kept in a cage. There is, however, one jarring note in nature—the monotonous cry of the storm-thrush—but it is the only one.

P. You forget the corn-crake.

T. W. To return to literature. How were your own works written?

P. Among crowds. I like to segregate myself among people. All the *Arabian Nights* was done in the street during walks about Kilburn and Hampstead, or on the top of omnibuses. My favourite haunts are Fitzjohn Avenue, Cricklewood, and Hampstead Heath. My motto is Schopenhauer's *Unendliche Verachtung, Unendliches Mitleid*¹—Infinite contempt, infinite pity—that is, contempt and pity for the world.

“I have just been reading,” I said, “*The Principles of Success in Literature*, by G. H. Lewis.”

“You did not get much help there,” commented Payne.

Just before I left he put into my hands for use in my *Life of Pater* an unpublished article of his entitled “The Poet.” It is quoted in my work Vol. 1, p. 231.

Besides being engaged upon *The Flowers of France* Payne had in view another volume of original poetry. He proposed giving it the title of *Dream Voices*, but I told him I was sure we could find something better; and as the opening poem was to be the autobiographical *Anima cum Animo*—a Dialogue between the natural soul and the spiritual soul—I suggested *The Mirror of the Soul*. Eventually, however, he decided upon *Carol and Cadence*, but the work was not published till 1908, when *Anima cum Animo* was removed from the beginning to the middle² of the book. He read to me at different times the whole of these poems, while they were still in manuscript. When I admired a poem I said so, and if I disliked it (as I certainly did dislike some of the passages that related to the Deity) I was silent. Then he would say: “You don’t like it,” and I would reply, “I like others better.” He knew what I meant,

¹ See also Payno's *Carol and Cadence*, p. 177.

² Page 327.

and when the book came out I could see that he had modified them, though I was sorry that some passages had not been altogether removed.

I was just then planning a little work on the Victorian writers, and I said to Payne: "The most important, in my opinion, are eight, namely, Carlyle, Thackeray, Dickens, Macaulay, FitzGerald, Swinburne and you."

He made some remark acknowledging the compliment, but added, "It will not meet with my approval, unless you place me below Swinburne."

"That," I said, "I cannot do. In the first place I do not admit that you, as a poet, are below Swinburne, and in the second, even if I did admit it, the additional string which you have to your bow—that of being our leading translator—puts you in a higher plane."

"But you have forgotten Ruskin," he said, and he mentioned a passage which he considered one of the very finest in Ruskin's works, namely that in *Political Economy of Art*, "On the Withdrawing of Timely Appreciation."

"Ruskin," I said, "belongs to the next plane. He is more a book than a man. There is no soul in him."

"But," followed Payne, "he is very beautiful."

"So," I said, "is a billiard ball."

He looked at me over his glasses—a way he had when any remark of mine took him aback, and then putting two fingers to the bridge of the glasses, in order (another habit) to press them more closely to his nose, he waited for me to go on.

I then asked his opinion of the *Heptameron*. He had not a word of praise for it, and he called the 23rd story "one of the dreariest productions of that Empress of Prigs and Bores, Marguerite of Angoulême."

Writing to Mr. Tracy Robinson 22 August, 1905,¹ he says: "You will see by the little book (*Sir Winfrith*) which accompanies this that a movement in my favour has begun in England. You would probably like to be in communication with the Secretary, Mr. Thomas Wright, who is the heart and soul of the movement, and who shares

¹ *Robinson Letters*, No. 12. These letters were sent to me from America by Mr. Robinson's second wife.

your enthusiasm for my work. He is writing my life, and will be delighted to hear from you.

"I have inserted another photo of myself in the little book [*Sir Winfrith*]. It is another position, but taken at the same time. It will replace the one taken for the selections as requested by you. Both photos are considered by my friends excellent, with the one exception (on which point all that I know seem unanimous) that they make me look too old, showing my hair *white* instead of gray. I am sixty-three to-morrow (23rd). I had an enthusiastic letter a little while ago from an Argentine lady, Susana Torres de Castex, of Buenos Aires."

On 5 September Payne presented me with the proofs of his translation of Hafiz.¹

In the course of this work I have given an account of a number of my visits to Oxford Road, but I went so often that I became known on the route. One day I boarded a horse-bus and settled myself on one of the front seats at the top. The driver, who happened to turn his head, recognized me, and to my astonishment (for it did not occur to me that anybody in London could possibly know where I was going, said to me: "This bus doesn't go to Kilburn to-day."

During the months of November and December Payne read the concluding portion of the proofs of my *Life of Sir Richard Burton*. He wrote on 16 December, 1905: "I send you the last portion of the proofs, and heartily congratulate you upon a most interesting and delightful work, which I think must be a great success,² although, of course, there will be plenty of abuse for you (and me also) from the interested scallawags."

In one of the last chapters I had made some facetious remarks respecting Lady Burton's declaration that her husband's spirit had appeared to her. He continues: "What I say about Burton's religion omit if you think well, but I *should* like you to reconsider those girds at

¹ Referred to in *Letters to T. W.*, No. 32.

² It was. It went through three editions the first year. A quite satisfactory result for a 24s. work.

the ghost.¹ I have (perhaps an exaggerated) horror of anything like cruelty. The poor soul (Lady Burton) meant well and believed in her visions. She was, of course, a hysterman; and that explains everything. Women in all ages have mistaken *vox uteri* for *vox Dei*, and not without reason it (*v. u.*) being the voice of 'The will-to-be' which is the nearest approach to the concept of Deity recognized by reason." In order to please him I omitted the passage.

His devotion to cats was as pronounced as ever. "The cat," he once said to me, "is the poet's animal." To unmusical, strange cats who sometimes on his garden wall made night hideous, he gave the names of Gladstone, Harcourt and other Liberal leaders. He said they were holding political meetings, and endeavouring to disseminate opinions that were calculated to unhinge the minds of the well-conducted of their species. Still, with all their faults, they were cats.

With his humour his friends would sometimes gladly have dispensed. Thus one day he sent to a friend who was staying at one of the principal hotels at Brighton a letter addressed "——, ——Hotel, Pork Haters' Paradise, Sussex." Oddly enough, and to the annoyance of the addressee, the letter reached its destination.

To General Byam,² Ted, as he called him, Payne was much attached, and in 1905 he visited his sister and her husband at their home, the picturesque Old Rectory, Bisley, Surrey. At that time there was some danger of war with Russia, and General Byam and Payne talked over the situation. "I never knew any man," General Byam used to say, "who is John's equal in the theory of strategy and the movement of troops. He is really a great strategist."

All went well until one autumn evening when, after dinner, the company adjourned to the drawing-room,

¹ On the galley (No. 69) he wrote: "I think I should alter this paragraph. It seems a bit cruel to poke fun at the poor ghost."

² He died in 1906.

a fine apartment with soft pink carpets and hangings, in order to converse and to hear Payne read some poems (subsequently included in *Carol and Cadence*) which he had recently written. Besides the family there were present Monica, daughter of Canon Stephenson, and Gertrude Chapman, a young lady¹ of sweet disposition who had the misfortune to be crippled, between whom and Payne there was a warm attachment. When the time came for reading the poems every one was expected to be as quiet as the Byam family portraits which looked down upon them from the walls, and not only to listen but to listen intently. General Byam, who had been shooting² all day, was dead tired, but he seated himself on the sofa and, in spite of weariness (and the effects of a good dinner), did his best to attend (though even at normal times poetry was apt to pall upon him); but at last, overcome by fatigue and the monotonous swing of the verse, he fell asleep. Which particular poem sent him off is not handed down, but it is not without interest that a stanza in one of the new poems, "Wanderers,"³ runs :

Marineres, shake out your sails ! This is the Land of Dreams,
Here strife for ever is, 'twixt that which is and that which seems.

An unmistakable snore interrupted the flow of poetry, and Payne, torn with anger, called his unhappy brother-in-law "nothing but a Philistine"—a Philistine being, in the words of Matthew Arnold, "a strong, dogged, unenlightened opponent of the chosen people—of the children of light."⁴

"Ted," by this time broad awake and overwhelmed by the enormity of his offence, apologized profusely, but Payne was not to be appeased, and next morning he took the first train back to London.

¹ She died shortly afterwards at the age of twenty.

² For Payne's views on Sport see *Vigil and Vision*, p. 86, where he joins hands with Cowper.

³ *Carol and Cadence*, p. 127.

⁴ Article on *Heine*.



GENERAL BYAM, HUSBAND OF PAYNE'S SISTER FRANCES.

From a photograph.

{To face p. 178.

He was offended once even with his favourite sister because she did not grasp, at the first reading, the meaning of one of his poems. He said she was "nothing but a molluse." The Czar of Russia was less an autocrat than the author of *Carol and Cadence*.

CHAPTER XIV

FLOWERS OF FRANCE, THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

1906

ON 1 January, 1906,¹ Payne wrote to Tracy Robinson respecting the American Selection of the poems: "I am sorry to hear of your trouble with * * * *,² but I am afraid you can do nothing 'to punish him.' I should not worry myself about the matter, the number printed will no doubt prove right; and as to the rest you are powerless. He will only laugh at you. Experience leads me to believe publishers capable of anything. They seem altogether to lack moral sense. It is a curious thing that (as Dickens remarks of the horse) a fine honest thing like a book should make a rascal of every one who has to do with the business part of it. The favourite and most generally effectual weapon of the publishing fiend is that of body and soul destroying delay—and against this the fine sort are quite helpless. Napoleon the First was perhaps the greatest rascal that ever lived (Gladstone, though marvellously gifted for mischief, was after all but a small kind of political sneak-thief in comparison). But he (Napoleon) *once shot a publisher*, and for this we may be sure that much has been forgiven him.

"Yours as ever,
"JOHN PAYNE."

"15 January, 1906. I have delayed this hoping the books might come; but no sign of them yet!

¹ *Robinson Letters*, No. 13.

² The English publisher of Mr. Robinson's *Selections from the Poetry of John Payne*.

“The political mud volcano¹ is in full eruption here, and we have the pleasing prospect before us of living (?) for the next five or six years under the most obscenely corrupt and immoral despotism imaginable, that of unadulterated democracy. God help us!

“I have heard nothing of the book. I carefully avoid the printed garbage facetiously known as the ‘Literary Press’; and have received *no* copy or communication of any kind on the subject from ****.—J.P.”

A little later the book appeared, and Payne received his copies, one of which he gave to me.

My *Life of Sir Richard Burton* appeared on 1 March, 1906. In it I gave the whole of the history (drawn from Burton’s own letters to Payne) of Payne’s and of Burton’s translations of the *Nights*, and proved by the use of parallel passages that Burton’s was merely Payne’s altered and spoilt.

I called on Payne at the usual time (4 p.m.) on Thursday, March 8th, and he warmly congratulated me. When sending copies of the book to Watts-Dunton and Swinburne, I mentioned that I was engaged on a biography of Walter Pater, and asked whether they could help me with reminiscences.

On 7 March, 1906,² Watts-Dunton wrote to thank me in behalf of Swinburne and himself for my gift.

He says: “At this moment we are both absorbed in the book. A few minutes ago Mr. Swinburne was expressing to me his admiration of it, especially of the judicious way you have approached the difficult and delicate subject of Lady Burton’s relations to Burton’s life. It is charming to think that you will be able to call upon us on Friday. Will you come about four and take tea, and have a chat about Burton, Pater and other subjects?”

Swinburne wrote on the same day: “Very many thanks for the gift of your admirable life of Burton. I have

¹ When Parliament was dissolved on 8 January, 1906, there was a Unionist majority of 74 members. After the General Election there was a huge Liberal majority. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister.

² *Watts-Dunton’s Letters to T. W.*, No. 4.

already read a good deal of it with great interest. I should like of all things to tell you in person something of the days we passed together in the south of France in 1869. They seem to me more like two or three than thirty-seven years ago. If you should care to look me up on the day after to-morrow, I should be happy to see you in the afternoon. My acquaintance with the late Mr. Pater was of the very slightest. I should doubt if we ever met more than three or four times."

On 9 March I made my way to the Pines where I arrived about four.

After I had chatted with Watts-Dunton, Swinburne came in—a slight figure in black, with a rather bald head, a red-gold shaggy beard mixed with gray, and a punctiliously neat—an obtrusively clean—appearance. He was kindness itself, and he had a curious stiff way of walking—a sort of side-long strut. That morning a very long and hostile review of my book had appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, a periodical which, whatever it may have been at that time, is now a joy to read if only for its brilliant leading articles. Both Swinburne and Watts-Dunton were just then very bitter against this periodical, but why I do not know. Anyhow, after greeting me Swinburne¹ said: "Mr. Wright, some ass in *The Times* has been reviewing your *Life of Burton*; but I think it a good book, Mr. Watts-Dunton thinks it a good book, and if we think it is a good book it does not matter in the least what anybody else thinks."

Watts-Dunton also assumed that I wanted comfort, and he told me several anecdotes in order to raise my spirits. In reality, however, they did not want raising, for the first edition of the book had been sold on the day of publication, and the second was fast running out.

After mentioning to Swinburne how greatly Payne admired his works, I said: "Another friend of mine, who also values them, the Rev. G. F. Sams of Emberton,

¹ Mr. Churton Collins who, in 1900, after fourteen years' estrangement, visited Swinburne found him "almost stone deaf." On this occasion (9 March, 1906) Swinburne could hear quite easily. Watts-Dunton used to say of him, "He was deaf only when persons he did not care to see happened to call on him."

wants you to tell him the meaning of the expression 'white and brown' in 'A Ballad of Burdens'":

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down,
Cover thy head, and weep; for verily
These market men who buy thy white and brown
In the last days shall take no thought for thee.

"The reference," said Swinburne, "is to the colour of the girls' hair and the tint of their cheeks. I remember the sense is packed rather close."

I happened next to speak of Mr. James Douglas's biography of Watts-Dunton, and Watts-Dunton presented me a copy in which he had made a number of marginal notes in pencil. We then talked of Walter Pater, and Watts-Dunton explained to me his theory on the Renaissance of Wonder.

T. W. America has produced only one poet—Edgar Allan Poe.

S. Quite right.

T. W. Payne, who was influenced by Poe, regards Longfellow merely as a rhymers.²

Swinburne then rose to look for some book, and as he walked about he several times quoted Mrs. Gamp, saying, for example, that he would do something or other if he felt "disposed." I wished he would refrain, for it affected me in the same way as did the information imparted to me when I was a boy that the Bird of Paradise fed on caterpillars.

During tea both Swinburne and Watts-Dunton talked much about Payne and eulogized his poems, but I have earlier in this work quoted their principal remarks.

Swinburne then took me up into his study where he showed me his collection of the Elizabethan dramatists, on which we chatted for, I suppose, a couple of hours. As, however, the conversation did not concern Payne, I omit it. I may observe, however, that when I said to him, "Who, Mr. Swinburne, stands next to

¹ *Collected Poems*, in 6 vols., 1904. Vol. i. p. 125.

² "The American Rhymers" he calls him in the *Heine*, i. 311.

Shakespeare as a dramatist?" he replied, "Webster, certainly." Recalling the trouble this poet had caused between Swinburne and Payne, I made no comment.

On this occasion and on every subsequent visit to the Pines I carried kindly messages between Payne and his two old friends. My hope, however, that visits would again be exchanged between them was not realized.

On 14 March, 1906,¹ Payne wrote to me: "I am glad you enjoyed your visit to Putney. *The Times* seems to be completely in the hands of the Philistines. . . . Sub-acid Review in *Telegraph* to-day. Evidently Press inclined to be disagreeable."

Next day I returned him his copies of the *Nights* (13 vols.) *Boccaccio* (3 vols.), and *Bandello* (6 vols.), which he had lent me for the purpose of this biography.

He acknowledged receipt of these books on 16 March, 1906²: "As to Reviews," he said, "your book will last and *they* will pass. I quite agree with you that your *Burton* is the best book you have written, and think it a model of what a biography should be. I am very glad to hear that it is selling well."

For some time I had been planning in connection with the John Payne Society a John Payne Birthday-book, and in this same letter Payne says: "The more I think of your idea the more I approve. I think it excellent." Twelve members were to take a month each—Mrs. Hutt agreed to do January, Mr. Casey February, and so on, but one event or another hindered, and the project has not yet been carried out.

On 15 March Mr. Mostyn Pryce, a relative of Burton's, made an attack on my *Life of Burton* by means of a letter inserted in the *Standard*. I sent the cutting to Payne, who said, 19 March, 1906³: "I return Pryce's feeble 'kick,' which is hardly worth noticing. All these puddling little attacks 'mean venom' but will do nothing but advertise the book."

On 13 April, 1906,⁴ he wrote: "I am delighted to hear

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 41.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 42.

³ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 43.

⁴ *Id.*, No. 44.

of the second edition of your book. It is the best possible answer to the very unjust sneers of the *Athenæum* and other logroller-governed papers. I repeat what I have told you, that I think your book a model of what a biography should be: and I am bold enough to think myself a better judge than the rancorous prigs of *The Times* and the *Athenæum*.

"I am in a very low state of health at present and much distressed by the loss of my dear Partie,¹ who died a fortnight ago of influenza and whose death is a cruel shock to me. It is dreadful to lose a creature that loves one as he loved me."

On 14 April, 1906,² Payne wrote to Mr. Tracy Robinson: "Have you seen Thomas Wright's new *Life of Sir Richard Burton*? You would like it. There is a lot about me in it, and he wields the cudgels manfully in my defence generally. . . . I have been ailing all this winter. Every new year brings a perceptible loss of strength and health generally; and the surrounding circumstances, literary and political, here are ill calculated to encourage anything but dejection. Why one lives on it is difficult to say, except that life is the worst and most obdurate of habits."

On 15 May a very appreciative and charming review of my *Life of Sir Richard Burton* appeared in *The Morning Post*, but what pleased me most was the following sentence: "We imagine that for the first time Burton has been shown as he was, and full justice has been done to that fine scholar, Mr. Payne. As far as the *Arabian Nights* goes, the glory that has been Burton's is now Mr. Payne's."

Of course I at once wrote to inquire whether Payne had seen it.

On 16 May, 1906,³ he replied: "Many thanks for yours. I take *The Morning Post*, which is about the only decent paper left, so have already seen the notice, which pleased me as doing *you* a little more justice than some of the others."

¹ Parthenopæus, the Persian cat.

² *Letters to T. Robinson*, No. 14.

³ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 46.

In reality, however, the Press had on the whole treated me well. One of my principal objects in writing the book had been to show that Burton had stolen the translation from Payne, and the verdict of the Press was, to use the words of the *Pall Mall Gazette*,¹ "Mr. Wright may be considered to have proved his case."

In respect to an attack on my book by "Ouida" Payne wrote, 4 June, 1906,² to ask whether I intended to take any notice of it. He added: "I should say not. It is silly enough."

On 6 June³ he wrote asking me to spend the evening with him on the following Thursday.

I accepted the invitation, and we talked chiefly about the Elizabethan translations, including Adlington's *Apuleius*, his copy of which he had lent me, and North's *Plutarch*. He praised both, but placed the latter far higher than the former.

On 13 June, 1906, I spent the evening at the Pines, and on 14 June I was with Payne again. He spoke of his friendship with Dr. Richard Garnett, who died on 13 April, 1906, but the conversation was chiefly about my book and his work the *Flowers of France, Romantic Period*, much of which he read to me. He also read "The Death of Hafiz" and "The Wrath of Venus." With the *Flowers of France* he had by this time made considerable headway. His idea was to render isometrically into English verse representative French poems from the 12th century to the present time, and the work was to consist of the following volumes:

1 and 2. *The Dawn*,⁴ 12th to 15th centuries (Châtelain de Coucy to Mellin de St. Gelais).

3. *The Renaissance*, 16th century (Ronsard to Saint Amant). Pub. 1907.

4. *The Dark Ages*, 17th and 18th centuries (Malherbe to André Chénier).

5 and 6. *The Romantic Period*, 19th century (Hugo to Leconte de Lisle) 2 vols. Pub. 1906.

¹ 12 March, 1906.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No 47.

³ *Id.*, No. 48.

⁴ Advertised as *The Beginnings*. See Letter to M. P. Borger, 15 September, 1912, p. 251.

7 and 8. *The Latter Days*, late 19th and early 20th centuries (Coppée to Paul Fort). 2 vols. Pub. 1913.

Of these he lived to publish only Vols. 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8. *The Romantic Period*, which he finished first, was issued in 1906. Among the poets drawn upon were Hugo, De Musset, Baudelaire, Lamartine, Barbier, Gautier and Leconte de Lisle, figures who would do honour to the literature of any race or time. The two volumes form, in Payne's words, "a complete Florilegium of the period."

Among the selections from Hugo is "The Captive Maid," which closes with the lovely stanza :

But, o'er all, when the light
Breeze skims me with its van,
I love to sit by night,
With dreaming eyes to scan
The sea that lies asleep,
Whilst, from the heavenly steep,
The moon, above the deep,
Opens her silver fan.

It is impossible to view the sea by moonlight without recalling the haunting beauty of these lines. Hugo is pre-eminently the poet of the beach. From Gautier—that seductive stylist and indomitable apostle of the dictery "Art for Art's sake" are taken forty-nine poems—"The Manor of Memory" being perhaps the finest. Who can forget that perfect stanza :

Betwixt her scarlet lips that pout
Half-parted, pearly lightnings run ;
Her splendid beauty opens out
Like a pomegranite in the sun !

In the second volume we have examples of the Muse of Sainte Beuve, De Nerval, Baudelaire, De Banville, Leconte de Lisle and others. De Banville's humorous lines on "The Poverty of Rothschild," are superbly rendered :

The other day in vain awaiting the receipt
 Of cash for that and this,
 I could not choose but weep for thinking in the street
 Of how poor Rothschild is.

Without a rap I was, propped up against a post,
 Like any beggar base ;
 And yet, above all else, that which concerned me most
 Was Rothschild's sorry case.

* * * * *

While taking lute or flute, I follow Fancy's flight,
 Where'er the baggage gads,
 He, convict of the desk, divorced from all delight,
 Figure to figure adds.

Each day he reckons up that fabulous amount
 Of his, his milliards twain ;
 And if the wretched man but farthings two miscount
 He must begin again.

* * * * *

Oh, how poor Rothschild is ! He never has the meads
 Seen, where the sun shines bright.
 The true rich man for me the poet is who needs
 But sun and air and light.

Of the fifty-three selections from Leconte de Lisle the most striking are "The Elephants," "The Bernica," "The Supreme Illusion" and "The Aboma" (the ringed boa.)

From the middle of June to 7 July Payne was at Tors Hotel, Lynmouth, North Devon, whence he sent me on 21 June, 1906,¹ some of the proof sheets of the *Romantic Period* in order that the poems on them could be read at the approaching second meeting of the John Payne Society. He says of these poems: "'Veni, vidi, vixi,'² and others exactly express my own attitude towards life. You may as you suggested like to read some of them at the meeting. Weather overcast, but pleasant here, the loveliest spot in England, perhaps." At Lynmouth he finished preparing for the press Vol. 3 of *Flowers of France, The Renaissance*.

This second meeting of the Society took place in my garden at Olney on the 23rd of June, the speakers being

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 49.

² *Romantic Period*, vol. i. p. 23. Poem is by Hugo.

the Rev. G. F. Sams (Rector of Emberton, Bucks), Dr. Oliver Smithson (Luton), Mr. E. F. Beesly (Bristol) and Mr. W. F. Kirby (London). Payne's friends, Mrs. and Miss Hutt, were also present.¹

In July Payne consented to read the manuscript of Chapter 28 of my life of Pater, which I duly sent him.

The letter of 26 July,² which accompanied its return, closes with: "I am in a pretty abject state of nervous depression and general physical debility just now, which keep me turning in vain round the work I want and ought to do. There is no greater hell than 'in suing long to bide' to the invisible powers for leave to produce the things that are in me." I could not just then leave home or I would have made for London in order to try to cheer him. Thinking, however, another change would do him good, and promising myself great pleasure in his company, I invited him to Olney.

He replied on 27 July,³ and included a sonnet as a specimen of Du Bellay's more substantial work, which he allowed me to print in the *Pater*. He adds: "The sadness of it is characteristic of the man, who spent the best years of his life in what was to him an abhorrent exile at Rome.

"It is very kind of you to want me to come down to Olney, but it is out of the question, at all events, for the present. I have always found home and solitude the best medicine."

On 3 August, 1906,⁴ Payne wrote chiefly in order to send me a couple of newspaper cuttings respecting himself for the purpose of this biography. He says: "Here-with cutting from *New York Herald* to add to your collection. You will be amused to see by the enclosed (from *Daily Telegraph*)⁵ how infallibly my name stirs up the venom of the half-a-dozen scribblers who monopolize (hence the, to the outsider, amazing unanimity

¹ A little later (on 15 August) died one of the most enthusiastic members of the Society, Mr. James Stanley Gilbert, the Panama poet. He was a friend of Mr. Tracy Robinson.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 53.

³ *Id.*, No. 54.

⁴ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 56.

⁵ A letter, I presume. I have mislaid the cutting.

of their pronouncements) the verse criticism (save the mark!) of the English Press. They are, of course, mostly themselves minute rhymsters (hence their peculiar venom!)."

He asked me to spend the evening of 16 August¹ with him, and apparently I went, but my notes are missing.

On 7 and 14 September appeared in *T. P.'s Weekly* a contribution from me entitled "Hafiz and John Payne,"² and on 9 September Payne suggested that if I thought of another article for *T. P.'s Weekly*, *Flowers of France* would be a suitable subject, a suggestion which I decided to follow.

In October I sent him the proofs of my *Life of Pater*, which he had kindly consented to look over. He writes on 17 October, 1906³: "Herewith I return you first set of proofs, on which I have noted a few small corrections and suggestions. They are quite insignificant and turn mainly on slight matters of style, which I myself should be inclined to treat differently. But it is, of course, entirely for yourself to decide whether you will follow my lead or not. The account of Pater's school-boy life is very interesting."

In December I sent him a copy of my *Life of Cowper*, and asked him to write a poem suitable to be recited at the approaching John Newton centenary celebrations at Olney. On 19 December, 1906,⁴ he replied: "Many thanks for the Cowper, which I am very pleased to have. As to the verses, all I can say is that I will drop the suggestion into the Lion's Mouth,⁵ and if the Powers behind (whatever they are) choose to send me anything to the point you shall have it. But you must not count upon it; I have often explained to you how absolutely impossible it is for me to write to order. And Cowper, though I have a gentle but genuine regard for him, is not an inspiring subject to me, which is, of course, a matter of temperament

¹ *Letters of T. W.*, No. 57.

² The quotation in it from Yacoub Artin Pasha was inserted by Payne's especial request.

³ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 60.

⁴ *Id.*, No. 61.

⁵ A reference to the Lion's Mouth at Button's—referred to in the *Spectator*.

and personal idiosyncrasy. When do you expect to be in town next? You will be glad to hear that it has been flood-time¹ with me lately and that in consequence the new book of (original) poems [*Carol and Cadence*] is now practically completed in MS. I should like to discuss pros and cons with you as to publication. As to *Flowers of France, The Renaissance* (Third Volume) is three parts printed. The remaining four volumes² I have had to abandon for lack of support, the first time such a thing has happened to me. As it is, I shall not only receive nothing for two or three years' labour, but shall actually lose by the issue."

On December 20, 1906,³ he sent me the required verses for the Newton centenary, observing: "The Powers have proved propitious and here are your verses! They are simple as befits the subject, but I hope you will like them."

I did like them, for they are very beautiful, but I was not satisfied because they dealt entirely with Cowper—Newton's name not even being mentioned. To oblige me he was good enough to write two additional stanzas, which he enclosed in a letter of 22 December.⁴

This year was published the second volume issued by the John Payne Society—*Abou Mohammed the Lazy*.

¹ It began on 19 November, 1906.

² In 1913 he issued two more vols., *Flowers of France, The Latter Days*.

³ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 62.

⁴ *Id.*, No. 63. The complete poem will be found in *Carol and Cadence*, p. 187.

CHAPTER XV

FLOWERS OF FRANCE, THE RENAISSANCE

1907

At the end of 1906, aware that Payne was in the midst of a verse-flow, I had asked him to write me a sonnet for inclusion in a biography of Matthew Arnold which I had in hand. On 2 January¹ he wrote: "It being still flood-tide, here is your Arnold sonnet. It is a question of now or never. Another few days (or perhaps even hours) it will be full ebb and there will probably be not another line to be got out of me for love or money for at least two years, if ever again."² The following is the sonnet:

MATTHEW ARNOLD 3

Arnold, no trumpets thunder in thy song;
The shrill-voiced fife too harsh was for thy need.
The Dorian flute, wherewith thou sought'st to lead
Men's footsteps, piping low, the meads along
Of plaintive thought, unnoted of the throng
Passed in our troublous times, when men scant heed
Yield to what serveth not their lust and greed;
Nor was thy voice for many enough strong.
Yet, for those spirits, few and far to find,
In whom the Delicate outvies the Loud,
The subtle part above the coarser whole
Who prize, 'tis well, thy guiding feet behind,
To wander, careless of the unthinking crowd,
Among the quiet byways of the soul.

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 65.

² With this letter he sent me the addresses of his two brothers William and Harry and some of his friends, who he thought would like to hear of the formation of the John Payne Society. Mr. Harry Payne became one of the most enthusiastic members.

³ This sonnet was also printed in *Carol and Cadence*, p. 173.

"The Rime of Melisande" and the "Death of Pan," written about this time, owed their origin to my urging that he should write more ballads.

On 30 January, 1907,¹ Payne wrote to Tracy Robinson: "You will be glad to hear that I have been writing (or rather producing) poetry without interruption for the last ten weeks with the result of 160 new poems. They are, I feel, the finest I have ever written; but I expect I shall finish by putting them all on the fire—and that, indeed, would be the most sensible thing to do, as I am strictly boycotted by the Press and the Publishing Trade here, and my private public, which has hitherto enabled me to issue my translations, has now failed me. My last undertaking, *Flowers of France*—a history-anthology of French poetry from the twelfth century, has had to be dropped for want of support after the third volume (there were to have been seven in all), so you see I have no reason to consider the stupid and ungrateful public. *Sunt lacrymæ rerum!*"

Early in the year he sent me for inclusion in the third edition of my *Life of Sir Richard Burton* the sonnet entitled "Richard Frances Burton," which, however, arrived too late for this purpose,² but it was included in Payne's next volume of poems *Carol and Cadence*.³

I spent the evening of 15 January with him. He read a number of the poems from *Flowers of France*, *The Renaissance*, including "The Skylark,"⁴ "Adieu to Life,"⁵ and "Of Poets' Immortality."⁶ When he reached the fifth stanza of the last I interrupted him with, "What do you mean by 'From Ursa to the Blackmoor's spall'?"

P. "Spall," a word used by Spenser, means "shoulder." In other words "From the North to the South Pole."

T. W. You ought to put plenty of footnotes—and then occurred another little duel⁷ on this subject.

P. It is not necessary. I do not write for the vile crowd.

¹ *Letters to Tracy Robinson*, No. 15.

² The third edition had been issued the previous week. Referred to in *Letters to T. W.*, No. 64.

³ Page 175.

⁴ Page 68.

⁵ Page 71.

⁶ Page 52.

⁷ See Chapter XIII, pages 163 and 164.

T. W. There is not one educated man in a thousand who would know what "spall" means. Of course he could look the word up, but life is short. You assume that everybody has as large a vocabulary as you have. I believe in footnotes.

P. I don't.

T. W. In any case it's a fine poem with lines that cling to the ear. When people get tired of the road from "Dan to Beersheba" it will be a pleasant change to fluctuate between "Ursa" and "the Blackmoor's spall."

P. Du Bellay is good, but Rémi Belleau is the sweetest of the Pleiad.

T. W. Speaking of this group, I find that books vary as to the members. Kindly give me their names.

P. Jean Dorat, . . .

I wrote it in my note-book and then, offering the note-book to him, I said: "Please put the rest down yourself and then there will be no mistake in the spelling"; and he wrote: Pontus de Tyard, Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, J. A. Baïf, Remi Belleau, Etienne Jodelle, and after doing so he read all the selections from Rémi Belleau.

Swinburne's name having occurred Payne said with a laugh, "When he was a young man and drank he wrote fine poetry; now he is sober he writes nothing of consequence."

"You are pleased," I said, "to be facetious. Drink had nothing to do with it. As a young man he wrote, his blood being hot, amorous—and melodious—poetry. When a man passes middle life such themes lose their interest for him. You have the advantage in that you are a philosopher as well as a poet. The lover dies, the philosopher lives till he dies. He is never at a loss for a theme. This explains how it is that your later poems are superior to your earlier ones."

He was pleased with these remarks.

In January two of the members of the John Payne Society had the temerity to write to him. He replied courteously, but the incident upset him, for he thought the Deluge was coming.

He says, writing to me on 4 February,¹ "People seem to have an idea that I should be entirely at their disposal and in that idea I do not concur. In fact I live a retired life, as you know, to keep clear of the importunate. . . . I look to you to keep people off me as far as possible, as I know you understand and sympathize with me in this point." And so I became a Buffer State.

In a postscript he says: "Verse-flow has now ceased after producing 161 poems, including three more ballads, one long, 'The Wrath of Venus,'² and two short. I still incline to put them all in the fire and am convinced that this would be the best thing to do. I wish I had burned those written in 1902 and 1903, instead of printing them. It would save me much in every way."

About this time a Hebrew professor approached Payne with the suggestion that he should undertake a new translation of the Bible, and Payne asked my opinion. The following conversation then ensued.

T. W. Do it by all means. A translator of the Bible should be a master of English (you are that), a brilliant oriental scholar (you are that), a true poet (you are that), and a layman (you are not in Orders). The whole of these four qualifications have never before occurred in an Englishman. The authors of the Authorized Version had the disadvantage of being professed theologians; moreover their ignorance of oriental knowledge was colossal. Still they were masters of English and they had poetical souls. That saved them. Their very blunders are beauties.

P. The Authorized Version forms, with the Plays of Shakespeare, the main heritage and principal glory of the English language.

T. W. I agree with you. Now we come to the Revised Version. Its authors were mere pedants and precisians, and, as your friend³ Washington Moon has proved, by hundreds of citations, their English—their grammar—is

¹ *Letter to T. W.*, No. 67.

² *Carol and Cadence*, pp. 143-53.

³ Washington Moon, as I very well know, was no friend of Payne's. All the same, Moon did a very valuable work, and I shall always hold his name in honour.

far to seek. They lacked not only oriental knowledge but also imagination. How can men who are not poets translate a work that teems with the highest poetry? Aldis Wright, a great Hebraist, is a fair sample of them. Read his annotations to Shakespeare in the Pitt Press series. Take anything he has written. Most of his work consists of notes upon the notes of others, but he made dust dustier. I cannot imagine any books more likely to repel a youth from Shakespeare. For such men to translate the Bible, whatever their other qualifications, was an outrage on commonsense. Thou art the man!

P. I am too old.

I thought for a moment, and then said: "Yes, I am afraid you are. But if you could do only a part—only one book—you would win the gratitude of your country.

He was not, however, the man to commence what he feared he could never complete; and even his Atlantean shoulders were incapable at such an age (64) of lifting so tremendous a burden.

A translation of the Bible by Payne would have fallen like a bombshell on Christendom. The protest caused by the *Nights* would have been nothing to it. But what a feast it would have been!

On 14 February, 1907, I sent copies of my biography of Pater¹ to Swinburne and Watts-Dunton. I find that in my letter which accompanied Watts-Dunton's copy I said: "I am now busy on a companion work, *The Life of Matthew Arnold*, and I hope you will some day let me talk to you about it. I often see Mr. Payne, but never without urging him to go and see you and Mr. Swinburne, but he is quite the hermit. He is now engaged upon some charming translations from the French poets—*Flowers of France*. You and Mr. Swinburne and he are the three finest men in England, and this I will maintain against all comers."

On 8 March (1907) appeared an article of mine in

¹ It is a detailed biography, founded on manuscripts, letters and poems by Pater and his friends.

T. P.'s Weekly on Payne's *Flowers of France, The Romantic Period*, the title being "A Great Anthology."¹

On 12 March (1907)² he wrote: "I am in a very low state of health, both physical and mental, and can hardly expect to hold out much longer. It is wonderful though how much the wretched body *can* endure without dissolution. My life has been one of suffering and misery enough to kill a regiment of pro-Boers, one would think, and yet here I am half-way to sixty-five! *Sunt lachrymae rerum!* Glad to see you on April 3rd."³

Swinburne, in a long letter of 14 March, 1907, after thanking me for my volumes said: "I know so little of Pater's work that I am quite incompetent to offer an opinion on their contents. I remember telling him how beautiful and how happy in its expression of a critical truth I thought a passage in his first book of which he had sent me a copy. I shall be delighted to discuss Matthew Arnold with you whenever you care to call on me. I still retain a very warm admiration for his best poetry, and I heartily agreed with Jowett's admiration of his *Literature and Dogma*—of his religious criticism. As a literary critic I never thought him worth serious consideration, but simply, when writing of English or French poetry, as a cultured dunce—most seriously and sedately silly."

Watts-Dunton wrote (10 March, 1907)⁴: "I have been reading with great interest the two fine volumes you have sent me, which are packed with matter of the most valuable kind. We shall be charmed to see you when you can call, but give me notice of your time of coming. When you do come I should like to get your opinion upon my recently published essay in the Supplement of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* upon Matthew Arnold and his work in prose and verse." Towards the end of the letter

¹ It had been read by Payne and returned to me in a letter of 9 January, 1907. *Letters to T. W.*, No. 66.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 68.

³ With his letter came a present of the proofs of the *Renaissance Period*, which he said would appear that week, and also a complete list of subscribers to his works.

⁴ *Letters of Watts-Dunton to T. W.*, No. 11.

he calls Arnold "one of the most remarkable figures of our time."

Payne was equally pleased when I communicated to him that my biography of Arnold ¹ was making headway.

In his *Autobiography* (page 4) he had written: "Matthew Arnold I knew (in early days) though not so well as I came to know him later. He is the one man after Swinburne whom I should call 'master.' I mean, of course, as a matter of appreciation and not of discipleship, as I can, on reviewing my life's work, see little or no trace of the influence of either poet."

I spent the evening of 3 April with him. In the morning I had called on Mr. Ramsay Colles, a Beddoes authority and enthusiast, and after mentioning the fact I asked Payne's opinion respecting Beddoes' poems. As a result of this conversation he wrote the fine sonnet entitled "Thomas Lovell Beddoes" which appears in *Flower o' the Thorn*, page 135.

I spent the next evening with Swinburne and Watts-Dunton. Of the long and interesting conversation that ensued I shall mention here only those portions that concerned Payne. Swinburne having by this time become very deaf, Watts-Dunton (whose voice was much clearer than mine) acted as interpreter. I asked Watts-Dunton whether he knew Mr. Colles. He answered: "Yes, he is the Beddoes authority. A man who has studied Beddoes is a man worth knowing."

I spoke next of Payne's sonnet on Arnold.

Watts-Dunton to Swinburne. We knew Arnold didn't we?

Swinburne. Yes, he was a bright fellow was he not! But he made some absurd remarks in his essays. He said there were no good prose writers before Addison. There were many. Think of Daniel's "Defence of Rhyme" and Holingshed's "Chronicle." Payne would agree with us. Have you read Arden of Feversham in Hollingshed?

T. W. (Shaking head.) No.

Swinburne. Then read it by all means, it contains

¹ For Payne's sonnet on Arnold see p. 192.

important things that Shakespeare made no use of. Then there was Tom Delaney, a master of prose, but a scribbler in verse. Read *Thomas of Reading*, a prose fiction by Delaney. The story is told with amazing power. It is about an inn kept by murderers on the Oxford Road. He then said "Have you read . . ."

But I did not catch the words.

Noticing that I looked puzzled he said: "Let me put it in your note-book."

He then wrote in it, in his schoolboy's hand,

Sainte-Beuve, Chroniques Parisiennes.

I said "No."

"Then by all means read it;" and he added: "If you want to please me you must praise Chastelard."

I then handed him a copy of the programme of the approaching Newton centenary celebrations and Payne's poem "Cowper and Newton" which was to be recited on the occasion.

On taking the poem he burst out laughing. "How funny!" he said, "John Payne, the translator of Boccaccio!" and he again began to laugh; but then, out of courtesy to me, he checked himself.

I said: "I see nothing surprising in it. Nature delights in incongruities. So do I. Besides, the great love for animals which Payne shares with Cowper forms an unmistakable link between the two poets."

I found that Swinburne's attitude towards religion was similar to Payne's. After some conversation on this subject he observed: "The priests have been the cause of trouble all down the ages."

Like Payne, Watts-Dunton thought lightly of Pater. He said: "A man is either a fountain or a reservoir. Pater was a reservoir."

A long conversation then followed which had nothing to do with Payne. It was chiefly on the early English writers.

Just as I was about to leave, Watts-Dunton said, "Swinburne is about to look out one of Scott's stories.

He reads to me every evening. He has the Scotch accent perfectly."

T. W. Then Scott still retains his hold on you both?
Watts-Dunton. Oh, yes. He is delightful.

As I left they bade me remember them in kindest terms to Payne. "Tell him," said Swinburne, "to come and see me when he has nothing better to do."

In April (1907) Payne issued the third volume of his *Flowers of France*, a work that covers the Renaissance Period. It opens with the noble "Canticle" of Etienne Dolet. One of the most beautiful poems is Rémi Belleau's "April," which contains the lines :

But I, forsooth, I give my voice
 And my choice
 To the month that its lovesome name owes
 To the goddess so frank and so free
 From the sea,
 Of old, that in bubbles arose.¹

The same author's "Wealth and Death" is equally beautiful. The amusing "Of Freedom in Love," by Olivier de Magny, is good in every stanza. He gives many fine reasons in support of his practice of passing from Anne to Margaret, and from Margaret to numerous other Annes and Margarets, one of the most convincing being :

By travel and discourse in various lands and seas,
 By talk with divers folk in divers languages,
 A man approves himself more rare and gains the fame
 Of one who's seen the world, a man of wit and name.

One of the freshest, most beautiful and most original poems in the collection is that "In Praise of a Country Life," by the gentle-minded Philippe Desportes. The line its author takes may be gauged by the following stanza, in which it is observed of the man living in seclusion :

¹ Greek : Αφροε, foam ; Aphrodite, foam-born.

Ambition stirs his heart not to a glow ;
 He masketh not his mind with cheating show
 Not violates his faith in anything.
 He importuneth not a prince's ear,
 But, with his lot contented, lives in cheer,
 Is his own court, own favour and own king.

To Lady Lewis, 18 April, 1907, Payne wrote : " I am in a very low state of health just now, the usual sequel of my periodical attacks of verse production, one of which (and an unusually severe one, as you may judge from the fact that it produced 175 new poems, or 8,000 lines of verse, in eleven weeks) has just passed away and left me in a parlous condition of nerve exhaustion. It is altogether ' a ridiculous opportunity,' as Mr. Podsnap would say, for nobody wants my verse and I do not know what to do with it when it is written ; but it is like murder and . . .¹ it will out."

Early in 1907 Yacoub Artin Pasha procured for Payne a Romance in Arabic entitled *The Marvellous History of Seif ben Dhi Yezn, King of Yemen*, and Payne commenced a translation of it, but the work was then put aside in order that he might prepare for the press his original poems and his additions to *Flowers of France*.

On 25 April the Newton celebrations took place at Olney, and in the midst of the proceedings was recited the poem " Cowper and Newton " which had been written by Payne for the occasion.²

On 5 June, 1907,³ Payne wrote : " I am very busy just now getting ready for the new issue (which will be my new poems) of the S.S. (*Songs of Silence* ⁴). I hope that the prospectuses will be sent out next week. You will be interested to hear that verse is still coming, number 202 having made its appearance yesterday."

The next letter, 18 June, 1907,⁵ refers to a book *The Real Sir Richard Burton*, by Mr. W. P. Dodge, published by Mr. Fisher Unwin : " Have you seen W. P. Dodge's

¹ Four words which I cannot decipher.

² See p. 191.

³ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 69.

⁴ Title afterwards altered to *Carol and Cadence*.

⁵ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 70.

Real Sir R. Burton (published by the High Tea Man) ? The notices I have seen of it have been very slighting, but it is said to have been written as a counterblast to yours," and he concluded the letter by asking for the return of some books on Matthew Arnold which he had lent me.

On 30 June, 1907,¹ he writes: "Herewith cutting from *Observer*, the only other notice I have seen of Dodge's silly book." He then refers to an attack made on me in a letter printed in the *Saturday Review*. He says: "I imagine both the *Academy* and the *Saturday Review* are nearly moribund; they certainly carry nowadays no particle of the authority they used to have. Hatred of me is common to both. Why, I know not. It is shown, among other things, by their refusing to take any notice of my books. I should like you, as soon as you find it convenient, to come up to London as I want to consult you upon a scheme I have as to my new poems, the flow of which ceased some three weeks ago at 221. I am very unwell and dejected." I at once wrote: "Cast away doubt, poet!" At any rate that was the substance of a cheery letter which I sent him, and which, I trust, had the effect of raising his spirits.

On a similar occasion I pointed out to him that his dejection could be traced to the insomnia trouble, the result of overwork, adding: "We are all of us the victims of our virtues."

On 4 July, 1907,² he tells me that he is "revising 10,000 lines of new verse for the press, a hateful task, as you may imagine, specially in view of the utter uselessness of the whole thing and the prospect of a heavy loss over the book."

On 23 December, 1907, contrary to my usual custom I called on Payne in the morning and had lunch with him. The conversation was chiefly on French authors. Of De Banville, who, as has been seen, was one of his most intimate friends, he spoke with great affection. He said: "De Banville revived old measures, the rondeau, rondel, villanelle, ballade and chant royal. A sort of

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 71.

² *Id.*, No. 72.

French Sir Walter Scott in his passion for building, he lived in a large house at Nevers—one wall connected with which cost him a thousand pounds; and he nearly killed himself with work in his endeavour to raise money for his fancies.”¹

Payne was drawn to Senancour² and Lamennais.³ Berenger and Musset⁴ he despised.

T. W. What of Verlaine?

P. Verlaine was not a great poet. He was nobody.

Later, however, his opinion must have undergone some change, for in his *Latter Days* there are translations of seven of Verlaine's poems.

T. W. And now as to the modern novelists.

P. Pierre Loti⁵ is marvellously picturesque, but he is a fearfully sad man. One of his tales is about a neglected cat. I could not sleep for months after reading it. Paul Bourget⁶ is the daintiest novelist that France has produced.”⁷

He regarded Hugo as “the shallowest, the vainest, the most recklessly disregarding of truth of all great writers.”⁸

Of Barbey d'Aurevilly, whom he once met, he said: “He was coarse of speech, and in the habit of saying whatever came into his mind, even in the company of women, without regard to anyone's feelings. As to his works, he is too inflated and diluted.” A translation of one of Barbey d'Aurevilly's poems will be found in Payne's *Latter Days*.

When I asked Payne some questions respecting the Bibliography of his early period, he said he had kept no list of his contributions to magazines and reviews and so was not able to render me under that head very much assistance. The information I was able to obtain

¹ De Banville died March 1891.

² In the sonnet on *Vigil and Vision*, p. 52, he quotes Senancour's last words, “Eternity be thou my sanctuary.”

³ See *Collected Poems*, ii. 255.

⁴ *Carol and Cadence*, p. 222.

⁵ Born 1850.

⁶ Cf. *Vigil and Vision*, p. 82.

⁷ In the sonnet “*Mens Anglica*,” *Vigil and Vision*, p. 82, he quotes Paul Bourget's saying: “*Les Anglais ont le fanatisme de la loyauté*” (The English have the passion of fair play).

⁸ *Flowers of France, Romantic Period*, i. 85.

from him and others will be found earlier in this work and in the appendices.

I then spoke of Watts-Dunton's admiration for Beddoes,¹ and added (by mistake²) that Swinburne shared it.

P. Then he is a convert, he cared nothing for Beddoes once—for nobody, indeed, who resembles Marston. He once said to me, "I am surprised, Payne, that a man producing such good lyric work as you should care for Beddoes."

T. W. Your own admiration of Beddoes, then, is as pronounced as ever?

P. I know him almost by heart. He has a most extraordinary power of crystallizing fantastic moods. His verses continually open a window upon the invisible world. Sometimes he accomplishes this merely by a word or two. He conveys a greater sense of the mysteries that surround life than any other poet I know. He is the nineteenth century ectype of Marston. He is Marston born over again. "The old gods are only men and wine." One thinks, too, of the massiveness of Beddoes' mind, and its intense richness.

T. W. A Marstonite is therefore a Beddoesite?

P. Certainly. Read Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*, and *Antonio's Revenge*. *The Dutch Courtesan* is a wonderful comedy. Marston is rough. In him heaven and hell have become neighbours.

T. W. An attempt has recently been made to create an interest in Darley.³

P. Darley is very thin.

T. W. How can I get information respecting your early days?

P. Ask Mrs. Hutt and her daughter. They will help you.

¹ There is an interesting account of Beddoes in Mr. Gosse's *Critical Kit-Cats*, p. 29.

² This I discovered afterwards by referring to my notes.

³ George Darley (1795-1846), author of "Nepenthe," and the lyric "It is not beauty I demand." He also wrote some dramas which, in Swinburne's phrase, have gone the way of all waxwork. See *Quarterly Review*, July 1902.

Something that I said then led him to make remarks complimentary to the Turks.

T. W. Is there any hope for the regeneration of Turkey?

P. No, because there is not timber enough to hang the Eastern Christians.

Owing to Gladstone's championship of the Bulgarians and others he used sometimes to call them in derision "the beautiful Eastern Christians."

In "A Grave at Montmartre" (of all places!) he girds at them as "God's Masterpiece," and his terrible sonnet "Turk and Slav"¹ may also be recalled. One of the reasons why he loved the Turks was "because they 'very properly' put a veto on the church bell-ringing nuisance, thereby obliging the 'beautiful Eastern Christian' to content himself with banging upon a sort of wooden gong—a *nacous*."

When I observed that his sympathies, like those of Sir Richard Burton, were rather with Mohammedanism than Christianity, he said: "Every one must recognize the infinite charm of the personality of Christ. He revitalized old truths, for instance the idea of righteousness."²

¹ *Vigil and Vision*, p. 103.

² Renan in his *Life of Jesus* (Chap. V) had made a similar observation.

CHAPTER XVI

CAROL AND CADENCE

1908

ANOTHER verse-flow came upon Payne at Christmas 1907, and continued through January and February 1908. He worked in a fury of white hot emotion. As the poetry poured out so he set it down. Early in the latter month, taking advantage of the state of his mind, I asked for a sonnet on Frederick Gustavus Burnaby, upon a biography of whom I was then engaged. On 13 February he wrote, "Here's your sonnet, which came out unexpectedly this morning after I had well-nigh forgotten it":

Thou wast of those with heart and hand who reared
Our England to her high imperial place,
And her therein maintained, despite the base
Curst crew, that fain upon the rocks had steered,
Her constant son, who none and nothing feared,
Nor at life's hand asked any greater grace
Than leave to look far Danger in the face
And pluck rebated Peril by the beard.
As first, so last, the Fates to thee were kind,
Vouchsafing thee the true man's most desire,
Occasion for the land thou lovedst so well,
Fighting to fall and on the desert wind
Pass, borne of Battle's chariots of fire,
To where, death-shrined, the high-souled heroes dwell.¹

On receiving the sonnet I asked him a question respecting the words "most desire."

He replied, 14 February, 1908²: " 'Most desire'—this

¹ This sonnet was afterwards included in *Flower o' the Thorn*, p. 135.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 73.

appears to startle you, probably because you do not bear in mind that *most* is properly an *adjective*, a fact obscured by our modern slipshoddishness and insincerity. I could give you any number of instances from Shakespeare, Sidney, etc. But you will soon get reconciled to it, specially if you try the experiment of replacing *most* by another word. You may trust me in the matter of English."

Of course he misunderstood me. I did not mean that he was wrong. He was never that. I merely meant that he was too archaic. It was the *servum pecus* trouble over again.

In the same letter he said, "I am afraid I cannot undertake to read your Burnaby proofs [he afterwards consented to read some of them, and carried out his promise] as I am (and expect to be for some time to come) very busy with family matters and work for friends. Besides which, poetry is still oozing from every pore, sometimes very fast, as you will understand when I tell you that I have written 1,500 lines since Christmas."

Carol and Cadence,¹ which was in the hands of subscribers in March 1908, is in many respects Payne's finest volume of poetry. In it he opens all the secret chambers of his heart. In it he expressed his strongest emotions (or rather they expressed themselves, for his hand was only the instrument), and emotions equivalent to them they inevitably provoke in the reader.

In its pages he returns to the department of literature in which he had no peer—that of ballad writing. Again and again I had urged him to this course. I had pointed out that beautiful as were his sonnets, important as they might be as treatises of philosophy in compendious form, prized as they must be by men of taste and culture, yet to the general reader he would certainly continue to be comparatively unknown unless he could return to his earlier methods, or adopt some other and more popular medium² of expressing himself. "It was the ballad,"

¹ The dedication is "Ad Arrigo Boito Amicizia ed ammirazione." Arrigo Boito, the composer, died at Milan 10 June, 1918.

² I subsequently learnt that some twenty-four years previous Matthew

I said, "that first gave you fame; to the ballad, therefore, return." As the result of my pleading *Carol and Cadence* is enriched with such treasures as "The Rime of Melisande," "The Death of Hafiz," and "The Wrath of Venus." Very beautiful is the description in the first of these poems of the death of the lover-poet, Rudel. As the captain said:

He'll never again the folk rejoice
With ditties dearer than gems of choice,
He'll never again uplift his voice
Or sing to the laughing lute.

In the arms of his lady the dying poet thought himself already in Paradise:

He felt him pillowed upon her breast
And thought him already at rest, at rest
Encompanied round of the ransomed blest
In Paradise above.

He thanked God for the "gotten goal":

He had lighted at last on the Golden Shore,
He had entered in at the Heavenly Door;
There was nothing on earth to live for more
And so in Heaven he died.

"The Death of Hafiz" carries the mind back to that great triumph of Payne's muse, "The Prelude to Hafiz." Noteworthy, too, is a fine poem called "Risus Solamen"—Laughter the sanctum—in which he says:

Laughter the lodge is in the wilderness
Whereto the hermit soul
Withdraws for shelter from life's labouring stress.

To laughter, indeed, Payne invariably had recourse

Arnold had given Payne similar advice. Arnold had written: "The sonnet is an alluring form, but I doubt if it does not, when too much followed, disincite one for others, which, after all, can do what it cannot do." See p. 43.

when he was angry with the world.¹ I have often heard him, after a tirade against various persons and certain conditions of things, find refuge in this "sanctum"—and his laughter on such occasions, unlike that of his verse, which is sardonic, was always of the good-humoured, merry kind. He often referred me to "Scorn and Sympathy" and "In the Crucible" as summing up his attitude towards humanity, and it will be noticed that the motto to the former is Schopenhauer's *Unendliche Verachtung Unendliches Mitleid*² already referred to. In the portions of the volume called "The Book of Birds," and "The Book of Beasts," are revealed Payne's continued love for his old favourites of the garden and the streets. He loved all the birds, even the hawfinch, that pirate in the brown bib, which with its toucan bill fed on his pears and drove away the blackbirds and other songsters. The cat and the donkey obtain, of course, more than their share of eulogy.

In "London Voices" his affection for the metropolis once more manifests itself, and on every page we are reminded of the quickness of his eye for anything great or small of natural beauty.

I said that the ballads were one of the great charms of this book; but after all it is not the ballads, beautiful as they are, which will most endear it to the sensitive reader. Its leading charm is the place occupied in it by the lady whom he had so persistently idealized—Helen Snee. Poem after poem is crowded with references to her, tribute after tribute is paid to the grace and loveliness of her person, the sweetness of her character and the beauty of her mind. In order that there should be no doubt whatever as to the identity of this lady he gives her Christian name, the date of her death, "Five lustres past," and in another place "five times five years," and tells—giving even minute particulars—the whole story of his passion for her—his exalted worship of her.

¹ See also p. 153. Cf. "Without laughing my spleene would split." John Lyly: *Mother Bombie*.

² See p. 174.

Two of the stanzas in which he recalls the terrible blow that her death dealt to him, we have already quoted.¹ He further says :

You in June² were born, in middle flower and suntime,
When the revel of the roses is most high.
I at August ending,³ hard on Summer done time,
When the world is growing grave for Autumn nigh.

But of all the poems on Helen Snee, the most beautiful and most affecting is that entitled "Her Grave."⁴ She is buried, as we said, in Kensal Green (Catholic) Cemetery. Particularly touching are the following stanzas :

Quiet is the night
And the moon upon the graves is shining, shining :
And it's oh, my love, my love, I'm pining, pining
For your sight !

About me and above,
The summertide is merry making, making,
And it's oh, my heart, my heart is breaking, breaking
For my love !

* * * * *

Like waves upon the beach,
The grasses o'er your head are thronging, thronging :
And the soul in me, the soul is longing, longing
For your speech.

At your grave I bend the knee,
Where beneath the clay you sleep, your narrow cell in ;
And with lips to earth, I whisper, " Helen ! Helen !
" Speak to me ! "

* * * * *

In the moon's unearthly light,
Through your covering-stone, pellucid seeming, seeming,
Methinks I see your forehead's dreaming, dreaming
Arch of white.

And in the pearl-grey skies,
Where the moon whiles veils her figure, slender, slender,
Methinks I see the grey so tender, tender
Of your eyes.

¹ P. 66.

² 15 June.

³ 23 August.

⁴ P. 134.

You left me long ago
 For the sleep that hath no earthly waking, waking :
 And it's oh, my heart, my heart is aching, aching
 For the dawn !

* * * * *

You were young and I am old ;
 But, when age and youth in death are meeting, meeting,
 Both from memory as a tale go fleeting, fleeting,
 That is told.

I shall know you, when you rise,
 With your seraph-garments round you streaming, streaming,
 By your turn of head and by the beaming, beaming
 Of your eyes.

But scarcely less beautiful are the references to her in the poem called " Alas ! "

I saw a woman with your eyes to-day,
 My love, long lost unto my sorry sight ;
 Your graceful, tender, bird-like turn of head,
 Your very same half-hesitating play
 Of humour round the lips, your delicate
 Rose-campion mouth and forehead wild flower-white,
 Your dainty trick of speech, my love long dead,
 Your very voice she had, and kind child air.
 I deemed you dead and buried long ago,
 Nought left of you except two words on stone.¹

He further tells us that she used to come back to him in dreams and visions, and when I read that I understood his disquietude when I made fun of Sir Richard Burton's apparition.²

To quote all the references to her, however, would be to give almost half the book. *Carol and Cadence*, in short, is Payne's *Vita Nuova*. It is a great book, a book to take to heart. No other volume gives so clear a presentment of his extraordinary mentality. At the end of *Carol and Cadence* is the announcement: " In Preparation: ' Volund the Smith,' ' The Lovers of Ravenna,' ' Maricn-Kindchen and other Romances in Verse.' " A translation of the

¹ Notice, too, the pathetic " In Vain," p. 250.

² See p. 176.

poems of Leopardi is also promised ; but none of these projects seems to have materialized.

A review of *Carol and Cadence*, which appeared in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, gave Payne unusual pleasure. After appreciative comments on a number of the poems it said : "To realize the heights to which Payne can rise upon occasion, one must turn to such another as the 'De Profundis.'"¹ A poet has a right to be judged by his best work. Mr. Payne's best is the best that any living poet has to offer."

In a P.S. to the letter to me of 6 March, 1908,² Payne observed : "It is the most appreciative review that has appeared of me for many years. It might, therefore, be useful for John Payne Society purposes." The review not only gave him pleasure, it encouraged him to write poems which otherwise would never have been written.

Oh, if only the leading literary reviews had been equally encouraging ! But they seemed ignorant of his very existence. How the world wastes its great men ! How busy it is placing bays on the brows of peddlers !

I would here warn any future student of Payne of a certain joke, at the expense of the public, to which he was addicted—that of ascribing mottoes to Cicero and other authors that are not to be found in their pages. A number of these quotations, as he admitted to me, were of his own composition. It would, therefore, be a waste of time to try to verify them. In Payne, indeed—and the same could be said of most other great poets—there was much of the child. With all his genius and learning—indeed, because of it—he was a big baby.³ Another childish feature in his character was his impatience. Whatever he wanted done, had to be done at that moment, and he could even be petty at times.

If to a woman he has paid some of the finest tributes that ever escaped from human lips, on the other hand few writers have said of women anything more bitter. He fully endorsed the teaching of the story of Pandora which is that when the gods made man they, in order

¹ Page 253.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 74.

³ A real genius never grows old.

I had asked Payne to look over the proof sheets of my *Life of Fred Burnaby*, but he declined on account of overwork. Evidently, however, he subsequently consented to read portions of them, for on 25 May, 1908,¹ he writes: "I return proof corrected. I think it was during the election campaign of 1874 that Disraeli spoke those memorable words about the Grand Old Gammoner, but am not quite sure. Verse still trickling fitfully and a new volume, *Flower o' the Thorn*, ready for the press, but whether and when I shall print it I do not know. At present I am too completely discouraged and disgusted to think of a new campaign. I have had a severe attack of influenza and am still, after six weeks, in a state of mental and physical prostration, but start for three weeks' sea-side on Wednesday, which I hope will pick me up a bit."

On 22 July, 1908, I received my first letter from the Golden Sister, and many other letters followed. She was kindness itself, and whenever I wanted help for the John Payne Society she was swift to render it.

On 30 July, 1908, I visited Payne at the usual time at 10 Oxford Road. I noticed that his eyebrows were still dark (they were so long² that Daisy Hutt, when a little child, used to curl them), but that his beard was quite gray. He was within a few days of sixty-six. The weather was hot—77 degrees, I remember, in the shade—and I was amused to see him spraying the room with eau-de-cologne. He said there was nothing like that for cooling a place.

He read to me a number of his new poems, which later appeared in *Flower o' the Thorn*, and also the pretended translation, consisting of 131 stanzas, entitled *The Quatrains of Ibn et Tefrid*, which he issued that year as a paper-covered booklet of 36 pages.

Ibn et Tefrid is described in the Prefatory note as an inhabitant of Demawend, near Teheran, and he is made the subject of a long and circumstantial biography, but

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 74.

² This was a characteristic of the family. Payne's father's eyebrows were so long that his daughter Frances used to cut them.

I may as well at once say that no such being ever existed. The invention of this personage was merely one more of Payne's little jokes at the expense of a public whom I am afraid he still despised and pitied. These quatrains, indeed, are an original poem by Payne himself. Many of them are most musical, though Payne the philosopher is as much to the fore as Payne the poet. They present an estimate of life something after the fashion of Fitz-Gerald's *Omar Kheyyam*. One proof of the power of the poem is the fact that many of the stanzas cling like burrs to the memory, as for example :

If God of my mind is, the little birds' singing
 So clear
 He rather than all the priests' chants and bell-ringing
 Would hear.

He agreed with me that only children and savages
 love noises. Then again :

The huckster, the hustler, when forced to live lonely,
 Go mad ;
 But the thinker, the dreamer, in solitude only
 Are glad.

The fourth stanza runs :

I've always accounted this earth where we languish
 For hell ;
 It answers the picture of it and its anguish
 So well.

But when I read this I am apt to recall that dinner of partridges and mushrooms, to which on an earlier page I alluded. In Payne's desert—the earth where he languished—there were certainly some verdant and very pleasant oases. Then, too, he did not always live up to his teaching, for in stanza 123 he says :

The word of the puzzle (to sum up the matter)
 Is, while
 Thou livest, to take what Life lays on thy platter
 And smile.

In the middle of the poem will be found a number of stanzas¹ which gird at FitzGerald. I considered them entirely unworthy of him and begged him to delete them, as well as several which refer to the Deity in a way that could only give pain to many readers. He defended these stanzas with acerbity, but afterwards, in respect to those relating to FitzGerald, he yielded to my request. The others he modified. If the reader compares this 1st edition with the 2nd edition, which was issued in 1910, he will notice the alterations to which I refer. He said subsequently to his sister Mrs. Pritchard, "Wright's advice was sound, after all."

But, if in deference to my feelings he deleted certain stanzas, he introduced others to which I took equal exception, as

No God who's a spirit for flesh and blood troubles
Might care.
As well expect Ocean to tender the bubbles
Of air.

Believing, as I most firmly do, in a Providence that watches over and directs all who call upon Him, stanzas of that kind were necessarily repugnant to me. On this subject we had in conversation more than once touched, but as on each occasion he displayed extreme irritation, I endeavoured to avoid it. Although unsatisfactory as a whole—for it is spoilt by the influence of Heine at his worst—*Ibn et Tefrid* contains many forcible and extremely beautiful stanzas. Both editions were issued anonymously.²

Payne, as I said, first read *Ibn et Tefrid* to me on 30 July, 1908. On the same occasion he read "In the Crucible,"³ and then made the following remarks respecting his method of work—or rather his absence of method, for he regarded himself only as the instrument. He said, "I sow seed, I have no control over the flower,"

¹ Sixty-nine to seventy-six.

² Payne gave me a copy of the 1st edition on 30 July, 1908, and a copy of the 2nd on 26 August, 1910.

³ *Carol and Cadence*, p. 177.

and then: "How complex one must be to get real simplicity. This idea is exactly expressed in the sonnet—a very illuminating sonnet—which I have just read. My favourite resort is Kensington Gardens.¹ I wrote 'Land of the Midnight Calm'² on the bridge over Regent's Canal, Edgware Road, Maida Vale, and 'Sundown'³ on the railway bridge near Maida Vale Station, Kilburn. I have treated London under all aspects."

The conversation then ran on to literature in general. "Dryden," he said, "stands for improvements. He is a maker of technique. He is the Beethoven of poetry. He has vanished except as a milestone in the history of literature, but we are very much beholden to him all the same." Payne had, in earlier days, been a lover of Dryden, whom in "Love Solicitous"⁴ he had called:

Our English amorist.
Well skilled the tangles of the wildering maze
Of loveful thought to loose and wind again,
Our minnesinger of the latter days,
Who said, nor said in vain,
"All other pleasures are not worth its pain."⁵

"*Manfred*," he continued, "is Byron's best book. It stands above all his other poems as heaven stands above earth. He had got something that he could feel only in verse.⁶ As a rule what Byron wrote in verse could be expressed just as well in prose. Shelley was at his best in his short lyrics and in 'Adonais.' He had not sufficient strength of wing for the longer flights. I cannot place him by Keats."

Speaking of Buckinghamshire he said—and I do not know whence he got his idea—"It is the county of snakes."

¹ See *Carol and Cadence*, p. 84.

² *Flower o' the Thorn*, p. 4.

³ *Songs of Life and Death*, p. 107; *Collected Poems*, ii. 251.

⁴ *Songs of Consolation*, p. 110.

⁵ *Tyrannic Love*, Act IV, Scene 1:

Pains of love be sweeter far
Than all other pleasures are.

⁶ It is interesting to compare with these words the eulogy of *Manfred* in Turck's work, *The Man of Genius*, English translation, 1914.

On 8 August, 1908,¹ I received from him a letter in which he deals with my criticisms of *Ibn et Tefrid*. He says: "First, as a matter of principle the alterations you suggest are not "improvements" as matters of refinement and burnishment, but of sheer watering, weakening, and debasement. *Artistically* considered the quatrains should stand as they are. Their chief charm is in the inextricable blend of reckless (if you like, *brutal*) humour with pathos and subtlety, 'the sublime hiding behind the masque of the grotesque.' On the other hand I thoroughly allow that concessions must be made to the timidity and narrowness of the publisher and public, though I expect it all to end in smoke. So here goes *animo liberato*.

"(1) Omissions: I quite agree that 44, 59, 68, 73, 74 and 117 had better be omitted; but I do not see your reason for objecting to 116 and 118. God in the former manifestly does not mean the head of the Hebrew Olympus. (2) Alterations [he appends a long list chiefly of concessions to my objections and then goes on]: Of course you know I am not a supernaturalist. If I believed in your 'Almighty' (whom, as a matter of fact, I regard as no more worthy of respect or consideration than any other of the innumerable Gods invented by the weakness and folly of humanity for their own amusement and mystification) my attitude towards him would be, not that of Job (who was a decent chap and a good pessimist in his way), 'but though he slay me, yet will I *scorn* him,' the necessary attitude of the philosopher who feels the soul to be the one thing immortal and who is, therefore, on the hither side of God and religions—*jenseits aller Götter*. As to Pessimism, the Optimist is like the traditional ostrich, and burying his head in the sand of theology imagines himself unseen because he cannot see; he is afraid to face the facts of life because they are unpleasant, and so narcotizes himself into the desired unthinking complacency by the use of theological and metaphysical opiates such as St. Paul, Tennyson, and Browning. Pessimist is the silly nickname (about equivalent to the

¹ Letter to T. W., No. 76.

name 'Jingo,' fastened by the pro-Boer on the patriot) bestowed by the Optimist upon the independent thinker who has arrived at the truth by an agony and bloody sweat of intellectual toil and moral suffering inconceivable to his libeller, and who has the sad and stern courage to look life in the face and accept its good and its evil as alike contemptible, finding his only solace in nature, and in that tragic power of laughter, which alone renders life in this hideous world possible to such as he. His attitude towards humanity is not one of hate, but pity, love and scorn. Infinite pity and infinite contempt. See my sonnet, p. 177, and 'Risus Solamen,' p. 264, *Carol and Cadence*, also many other passages, especially of *Vigil and Vision*. No spiritual good ever came of Optimism. It is necessary for carrying on the material, mechanical work of the world (if the *servum pecus* could see life as it really is, they would despair and die, not being strong enough to laugh and live); but all the spiritual work, all the great artistic and mental work of the world has been done by the so-called 'pessimist' from Job, the Ecclesiast, and Plato to Wagner and Schopenhauer. *Verb. sap.*

"P.S.—Any other omissions you might suggest I would, of course, consider."

It may here be said that although we could talk freely, as we often did talk, on the subject of the Bible, on orthodox religion we could never talk. At the mere mention of the subject the air suddenly became electric, he railed at "Semitic Optimism" and at the "foetor Judaicus," and hurled at my unfortunate person bombs from Omar Kheyyam, Ferdausi, the Upanishad, the Kathopanishad, the Atmapuranopanishad,¹ and Heaven knows what.

On 22 August a meeting of the John Payne Society was held at Olney in honour of Payne's sixty-sixth birthday—although the actual day was, of course, the 23rd. Messages from Payne and Sir Edward Ross were read and Mr. John Casey and Mr. W. F. Kirby delivered addresses. Reference was made to the new translation

¹ See his *Omar Kheyyam*, pp. xlix, lv, 14, 73.

Seif ben Dhi Yezn, upon which Payne was engaged, and several of Payne's poems were recited.

On 13 August (1908)¹ Mrs. Pritchard wrote from Switzerland to tell me that she would do all in her power in the interests of the Society, in the hopes that by its efforts her "dear and wonderful brother would take the great and unique place his genius deserves."

She concluded: "I would ask you kindly not to let my brother see this letter, as he is so extremely sensitive on the point of self-advertising, and I am so nearly related to him. Thanking you for your disinterested and enthusiastic appreciation of fine work,

"Believe me, sincerely yours,

"A. H. MOSTYN PRITCHARD."

¹ *Letters of Mrs. Pritchard to T. W.*, No. 1.

CHAPTER XVII

FLOWER O' THE THORN

1909

ON Saturday, 10 April, 1909, died Algernon Charles Swinburne, the only poet of the day who could be regarded as Payne's equal. Payne felt keenly the loss of one with whom he had been for so many years on the most intimate terms, and it may be noted that the dedication of his next volume of verse, *Flower o' the Thorn*, is to Swinburne's "beloved memory."

Sometimes Payne took his friends, or rather they took him, to concerts at Queen's Hall and other places. It was on one of these occasions that he made the remark "To me all the arts are one." If Payne liked the performance all went well, but he was most intolerant of what he called "inferior stuff." When he did not approve, everybody around him had to know, and it was more than his friends could do to keep him quiet. The complacency of the rest of the audience also exasperated him.

"Never mind," once said one of his friends, "perhaps they like it"—a remark which did not mend matters, for Payne never allowed anybody to have an opinion of his own. Sometimes his feelings were so churned up that he could no longer contain himself, and he would then break away from his friends and stalk ostentatiously out in the direction of a favourite resort, where he would console himself with oysters. In short he was "a Tartar to take out."

On my observing to Mrs. Byam, Payne's sister, "It is curious that a man so abnormally shy should act so boldly at a concert," she said: "But this shyness and

audacity went side by side nevertheless. You see, at the concerts the personal touch was wanting. He was audacious in a crowd, but if it was a question of intruding himself on a person, or of a person intruding upon him, he was panic-stricken."

In the meantime the hopes built on *Flower o' the Thorn* had been cruelly dashed. The book had been printed, like many of his previous works, by E. J. Brill, of Leyden in Holland, and the edition had been limited to 300 copies of which 50 were on large paper, the prices being 7s. 6d. and 21s. respectively. The prospectuses had been sent out early in the year, but on 13 May¹ he wrote to me: "The new book *Flower o' the Thorn* has gone the way of the rest and more so, only 40 copies having been subscribed; so there will be no more books from me, as the public choose to fine me heavily for daring to write what is not wanted. It will be out by the end of the month.

"The winter has tried me more than usual, having produced grave symptoms of heart and liver trouble, but I am slightly better than I was. The cats are well, and the frost coming on I am in my prime of youth intellectually; but the physical burden of life weighs more hardly upon me every day."

I may here say that I did not altogether sympathize with Payne's attitude towards the public. He made £4,000 by his translation of the *Nights*, and he must by his other translations have made at least another £2,000. Payne the Translator had therefore no reason to complain (nor did he). As for Payne the Poet—the true Poet never has been paid and never will be. His fame, too, is almost invariably post-mortem. In Payne's garden were bay-trees and pear-trees. The bays never grew pears.

In reply to his letter of 13 May I wrote on 22 May as follows:

"DEAR MR. PAYNE,—

"I ought to have begun 'Dear King John,' for

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 78.

whereas there were till lately (to use Cowper's expression) 'Two Kings of Brentford on one throne,'¹ there is now, Swinburne being dead, only you. I am grieved to hear that your new volume of poems has met with so little success but still more grieved to hear that you have heart and liver trouble. For your own sake, for the sake of literature, for the sake of us all, take every possible care of yourself. In particular get all the fresh air you can, and do not neglect exercise. Don't let the indifference of the public affect you. Dance to every mood. As for your place in literature, I have never, as you know, had any doubts. Good work is bound to be recognized ultimately. A few years ago people were crying up Tennyson, Browning, Newman (for his prose) and even smaller fry. Now the fiat has gone forth that Pater, Arnold, FitzGerald and Meredith were the only gods. Well, I have myself (by means of my works) had a hand in directing public opinion. Few give me credit for it, but that doesn't matter. The fact remains, and I shall din John Payne into the unwilling heads of the public until they at last recognize your merit. By and by they will say: 'Oh, we all knew John Payne was a great poet. We didn't want Mr. Wright to tell us that.' Well you know the world, and you are independent of it. I've told them that FitzGerald, Arnold and Pater are greater than Tennyson, Browning and Newman (who is a mere insect); and I take it to be my business to tell them that Payne is as high above FitzGerald, Arnold and Pater as these three are above Tennyson, Browning and Newman."

There is much more, for the letter was a very long one, but I have given sufficient to show how I used to deal with Payne's fits of despondency.

I was just then arranging for a meeting of the Cowper Society at Lincoln's Inn, and I asked Payne to write a poem on Cowper as a law-student at the Temple, but he did not see his way to comply.

A little later *Flower o' the Thorn* appeared and was found to contain some of his finest work. It is divided

¹ Cowper, *Task*, i. 78.

into two parts "Arcadia in Urbe" and "Sun and Shadow." The former concerns itself chiefly with the London he so dearly loved—Kensington's green gardens, with their peacocks,¹ the "Lighted Windows," the lilac against the garden wall, the pigeons in the street, the "Organ-Dancers" and many another city scene.

In the opening poem, "Sun and Shadow," he compares the youth of former days with those of the twentieth century, greatly to the disadvantage of the latter, whom he calls "but puppets in the peep-show of the present"; but it is only fair to the present generation of young men to say that his views entirely changed when the Great War broke out in 1914.

The philosophic "Aim of Life" is followed by the patriotic "Britannia coram Barbaris," in which he foresaw the terrible struggle which six years later was to rend the continent. In this splendid outburst he says:

I have loved thee, mighty Mother, since I grew to understand
What a glory is thy story, what a healer is thy hand,
What a shadeless splendour hovers o'er thy proud imperial head,
What a halo flames and flowers round the memories of thy dead.

The enormous strength of Germany led him to say:

Sad the day will be for Europe, sadder for the subject world,
When thy lions cease to ramp it, when thy rainbow flag is furled,
When the empery of the nations passes from the nations' friend,
From the frank, free-hearted Briton to the sour, sardonic Wend.

Then his pride of England towering above all other thoughts, he exclaims:

Yet despite his strength and cunning, little cause there were to
dread,
This thy new rapacious foeman, if as sovereign Shakespeare said,
To ourselves and thee, our Mother, we thy children rest but true,
If the heart of England olden beat again in England new.

He cannot believe, however, that England will pass and perish from her "place beneath the sun," and leave her

¹ *Flower o' the Thorn*, p. 21.

"heritage of honour to the Vandal and the Hun"; but if, indeed, it is fore-ordered "that her course is near its close," he prays that she may not perish by inches, but "die" with the corpses of her haters for her "catafalque heaped high." Lyrist, ballad-writer, sonneteer, Payne is also the British Tyrtæus.

As we have already observed, the great poet has from earliest time been also a seer. Indeed the two terms have come to be regarded almost as synonymous. We have seen how forty-seven years previous to the commencement of the Great War he prophesied that England would take her stand by the side of France. He prophesied also the defeat of Russia by Japan, and in the poem just quoted he displays all the qualities of the traditional seer. Other instances of his prescience could be given.

As might be expected the volume contains a poem on Nietzsche, to whom he doles out both praise and censure.

Nietzsche, I love thee not ; thine every page
With insults to my Gods my teeth doth set
On edge and flouts my fondest faiths.

And yet he cannot but love him—for his "thought-awakening word."

Good or ill,
My soul it floods with fertilizing strife
And makes me know myself and what I will.

The last poem "Lethe" will cling in every reader's memory :

Our deeds, our words undying are. In vain
Endeavour is to efface the done and said.
Yet fabled 'tis that, when a man is dead
And to the shadow land, the world inane,
He comes, he finds a river round the plain
With slack flood flowing, drowsed and dull as lead,
Whereto he may bow down his heavy head
And drink forgetfulness of joy and pain.
An idle tale ! If we live after death,
Thought will live on with us and memory

Of all that in this world of mortal breath
 We did and said and suffered : all that Life
 Of pain and pleasance, solace had and strife,
 Will dure with us to all eternity.

To the woe that for so many years proved the Grave of his Songs there are touching references both in "Phantom Quest" ¹ and "Walls of Severance." ²

He issued privately in 1909 some political skits called *Humoristica, First and Second Series*. The *First Series* consists of attacks in the shape of adaptations of Nursery Rhymes against various members of the Liberal Party, among those included being Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Augustine Birrell, Campbell-Bannerman (that hyphen again !), Asquith, F. C. Gould, John Burns, John Morley, Jeremiah Flavin and Keir Hardie. There are also verses on the modern murderers of sleep—"The Night Cabman," "The Coal-man" and others. The booklet is signed "Castigat Ridendo." ³

In the *Second Series* are more verses against the murderers of sleep—"Midnight Revels" and the "Modern Juggernaut" (The Motor Bus) for example, but the tirades are mainly directed against the Liberal leaders and others, the names in addition to those mentioned in the first series being Dr. Macnamara, W. Redmond, Herbert Samuel, T. W. Russell, Bob Reid, Will Robson, Hilaire Belloc, George Bernard Shaw, James Bryce, and T. P. O'Connor. The Bishop of London (Ingram) and Sir Oliver Lodge are let off lightly. Rudyard Kipling's offence consisted chiefly in his "brain-abraiding name," but he is allowed to be a "clever and unassuming writer."

Mr. (now Sir) A. T. Quiller-Couch, another unblushing hyphenator, is addressed in the following lines :

A. T. QUILLER-COUCH

Mr. Couch, since your name is A. T.,
 Why carry a deck-load of "Quiller" ?

¹ Page 137.

² Page 138.

³ Which may be translated, "Laughter, the whip."

Why pile up four names upon three,
 Mr. Couch, since your name is A. T. ?
 What ship to Posterity's sea
 Ever steered with a hyphen for tiller ?
 Mr. Couch, since your name is A. T.,
 Why carry a deck-load of "Quiller" ?

Against the Jews he is exceptionally bitter. In imagination he hears them singing the "Hebrew National Anthem: 'I'd love to be an agent and with the agents stand,'" and there is a reference to "the late Dean Farrar's comic life of Christ."

I was at this time engaged on biographies of William Huntington, Joseph Hart, Augustus Toplady and Isaac Watts. I did not send copies to Payne for I knew he would not read them. He had no sympathy whatever with my Evangelicalism—shall I say my Calvinism ! In the margin of my *Life of Burton* he wrote : "Exaggerated Protestantism is to me worse than the other thing." To Romanism he was always, much as he despised its tenets, a little indulgent, and I have no doubt the fact that Mrs. Snee was nominally¹ a Catholic influenced him to some extent. Even in his essay on Dolet,² done to death by the Romanists, he shows some leniency towards Mrs. Snee's religion. At the same time for the pretensions of the priests and the stories of the saints he had the utmost contempt. He called "the tale of Joan of Arc" "pure trash."³

At the house of his old friend Dr. Nix, 11 Weymouth Street, Portland Place, Payne was a frequent visitor. He used to go every Sunday evening and would stay till midnight chatting or reading aloud his poems. It is true that with Dr. Nix, who was an advocate of fresh air and plenty of it, Payne did not see eye to eye, but he had for Mrs. Nix and her cookery a profound respect, and he loved the children, who came to regard him almost as a second father. Even Bishop Latimer was not fonder

¹ In her letter of 10 May, 1876, to O'Shaughnessy, she asks him to take from her a sovereign to her mother. She adds: "Do not give more. it would only find its way into the pockets of Catholic priests."

² MS. Essay on Dolet, p. 35.

³ *Humoristica, Second Series*, p. 40.

of a pudding¹ than was Payne, and he spoke of Mrs. Nix's puddings and pastry as he would of other poems for which he had a vast appreciation—those, for example, of Keats and Beddoes. He nursed all the children at different times in their long clothes, and when they grew to be big children he used to like to take all the family to a lobster supper at Pagani's in Great Portland Street. Indeed, every Bank Holiday he insisted on either a lobster supper at Pagani's ("the usual table" always, if possible, being engaged), or an oyster supper at Dr. Nix's—his custom being to order 150 oysters to be sent to the house a day or two before the great event. But for the wind—and he called Dr. Nix's "The House of the Four Winds"—11 Weymouth Street would have been heaven below. To this drawback he alludes in a letter of 14 November, 1909, written to the eldest daughter, Mrs. Cunnington.² He says: "Dear Ida,—I am nursing a baddish cold and hope by stopping at home to-night (what weather!) to keep it from becoming one of my 'peculiar,' which would mean a week of abject misery. Would I could pass it to Winnie or our Dave! [Winston Churchill and Lloyd George.] I suppose the governor is sleeping on the roof-top *à l'oriental*, in order to enjoy his favourite weather to the full. I hope you are giving him the full benefit of it indoors, having all the doors and windows nicely open so that the balmy breezes may percolate freely through his organism and chasten the bacilli. I hear that Shackleton contemplates camping out for a week or two in Portland Place, as a preparatory training for the Antarctic Pole, where the climate is much of the same type.

"Yours affectionately,

"JOHN PAYNE."

As of old, Dr. Nix refused to see the dark side of things. There wasn't a dark side. He himself was all cheerfulness. His patients welcomed him. His medicines operated

¹ "You could draw me all round the town with a pudding," said Latimer.

² Afterwards (20 January, 1912) Mrs. Romeu.

before they were taken. He was, in short, an incurable optimist. He even took his fees cheerfully. Curiously enough, Dr. Nix's salient characteristic appealed forcibly to Payne, who once said to him: "All doctors are useless unless they cheer you up."

To Payne's dislike of double-barrelled names reference has several times been made in these pages. He went so far as to make a little book of them, which he carried about in his pocket, and he would read them out at Dr. Nix's, amid roars of laughter. "Have you found a new one?" he would ask almost every time he went to the "House of the Four Winds." "Here is a gem," Mrs. Nix said to him one day, "Arthur Wigglesworth-Owen." Payne burst out with uncontrollable laughter—that laughter which was so infectious, the whole family joining in, and with his eyes glued to his note-book he entered the delicious name of Arthur Wigglesworth-Owen.

Occasionally he and Dr. Nix went on an excursion to the New Forest together; but Payne, as already hinted, was not an unmixed joy to take out, for he was most outspoken in his criticisms of persons they passed—especially if they happened to be dressed inappropriately, and he used to take upon himself to alter the displayed advertisements on hoardings if they displeased him. On one of these the public were urged to "Try Lipton's Tea. There is nothing like it." Underneath Payne wrote, in bold letters, "Thank God!"

In the summer of this year Payne, Dr. Nix, Colonel Stephans (an old fellow-student of Dr. Nix's) and Dr. Nix's daughters Ethel and Christine went for a yachting trip.¹ They started from Southampton and did the south coast, visiting among other places Bournemouth, Portland, Plymouth, Fowey and Falmouth.

¹ The yacht was lent by one of Dr. Nix's patients.

CHAPTER XVIII

HEINE

1910-1911

IN January 1910 Payne removed from 10 Oxford Road to a larger house with a conservatory and a large garden—Kingswood, Mortimer Crescent, Kilburn Priory, and while there he commenced his translation of the poems of Heine. I was very sorry to learn that he had left his old home, in which so much of his best work had been done, and which had for me so many pleasant memories. It seemed like tearing up a tree by the roots, and I think he himself sometimes regretted the change.

I asked whether the removal of so many books did not worry him. "No," he said, "I gave minute directions to my servant, and then went away for a fortnight. When I returned everything in the new house was ship-shape."

He further informed me that his principal reason for moving was to get a little further away from the church bells and the motor buses. The bells and the cars were to Payne what the demon fowls were to Carlyle.

Among the pleasantest of my visits to Payne that year was the one made on 29 August, a sweltering hot day, after my return to London from Sidmouth where I had been collecting materials for my biography of Toplady. He had erected a tent on the burnt lawn and we sat in it and chatted. The ritual at tea-time was more elaborate than ever. He used on this occasion two tea-pots, each seven and a half inches high. They looked, however, more like coffee-pots. He called them Ridgeway's Hawthornden, and he advised me to get a pair like them.

When the impressive function was over, the following conversation ensued.

P. I am sixty-eight and my health is steadily declining.¹

T. W. You look younger than I. I am quite gray, whereas your moustache is brown and your eyebrows are still jet black.

P. My friend Sir George Lewis² accused me of dyeing them. I said, "Haven't I done it well to leave some gray hairs!"

T. W. I have been taken for seventy. (I was fifty-one.)

P. That is nonsense. Your full beard and blue glasses make you look six years older, no more.

He then read to me the second edition of *Ibn et Tefrid* and gave me the copy. We talked next of his translation of Heine, and at my request he read me a number of the poems, all of which were written on folio sheets of flimsy paper. He told me that the work owed its completion to the urgent instance of Sir Edward Burne-Jones.³

T. W. There is a great freshness in these poems.

P. I always enter into the very spirit of any writer I translate. In this work I intend to incorporate a few translations from Heine made when I was a boy.

T. W. Which are Heine's best poems?

P. Those which he wrote on his deathbed. Heine is the first poet of Germany. His only rival is Goethe. No woman could appreciate Heine. Indeed you would not like her if she could.

When reading, Payne every now and then fell into his old habit of shrugging his left shoulder—evidence, as I have already noticed, of nervous delight. The orange tie flamed under his chin, and between the poems he removed his magenta handkerchief to rub his glasses.

P. Heine is thoroughly spontaneous. The love-poems were written to his first sweetheart Amelie. "I think," he said, with an accent of conviction, "I am Heine redivivus."

T. W. Heine is to Germany what Burns is to Scotland.

¹ Mrs. Byam, his sister, used to liken him "to a highly-strung instrument."

² He died in 1911. See p. 239.

³ The work is dedicated to Burne-Jones.

P. Much more. Burns is merely a humorist.¹ His poetry is utter commonplace. Heine has often been translated, but never before by a poet.

He then read "The Two Grenadiers."

T. W. The death of Swinburne must have been a shock to you?

P. When I heard that he was ill, I wrote to Watts [Payne would still never say Watts-Dunton], expressed sympathy and said I would gladly call if it would be agreeable to him. He replied courteously, but took no notice of my hint.

Payne then talked of his early days.² "My greatest friend," he said, "was Max Eberstadt,³ secretary to Sir Ernest Cassel. Sir George Lewis's⁴ wife was Eberstadt's twin sister. My friend Cazalis,⁵ who was doctor at Aix-les-Bains and practised in winter at Paris, where I stayed with him, came to see me last April. Dear old thing! He embraced me French fashion. He died last June (1910). To return to my manuscript, Heine seems so formless after Leconte de Lisle."

After reading "The Blue Eyes," "New Spring," and other translations from Heine, he talked of his boyhood at Bristol, and Bristol scenes and associations. He called Chatterton "a poor poet."

Of Payne's sufferings from insomnia we have already spoken. By this time they had become well-nigh unbearable, and in September he went to Harrogate in order to try whether the hot baths would do him any good.

Mrs. Pritchard, who was then an invalid, and her nurse Miss Brereton, were also to visit Harrogate, and it was

¹ In a footnote in the *Heine*, i. 311, speaking of Burns, he refers to "the coarse but genuine humour which redeems the commonplace sentimentalities of the Scotch versifier."

² Most of this conversation is incorporated in the early chapters of this work.

³ See *Vigil and Vision*, p. 83.

⁴ See pp. 83 and 104.

⁵ In the American edition of Payne's poem the name is spelt incorrectly. *Flowers of France, The Latter Days*, 1813, is dedicated "to the memory of my beloved friend Henri Cazalis, a true poet and a noble-minded man."

arranged that Payne should meet them at the station. He was not there, but they came upon him some little way off, peering characteristically into a draper's window, Marshall and Snelgrove's, the contents of which had so interested him that he had forgotten the appointment.

He stayed at Harrogate several weeks, but derived no benefit from his visit.

On 23 November occurred the death of his brother William.

Early in 1911 I asked him to write a sonnet on Dryden and another poem dealing with Cowper, but as the following letter shows, I was unsuccessful.

He says, 11 January, 1911¹: "I am afraid there is no chance of a sonnet. Dryden is outside my range, and all I could say of Cowper I have already done.

"Heine, as you will see by enclosed, is being launched, but it will depend upon subscriptions," he said, "whether it will be printed. I do not intend to spend any more money upon the stupid and ungrateful public. Insomnia very bad. Hot baths² no use in my case. I tried them long ago. The best remedy I know is a piece of cake or the like eaten about one o'clock a.m. That often gives me a few hours' sleep. As you know, I have all my life been an open-air and exercise man, practically all my poems having been composed on the march and mostly in the London streets. To this I attribute my comparative youthfulness, notwithstanding extreme frailty of physique."

For some time Payne had had difficulties with his servant Parsley, and he was in daily expectation that Parsley would give him notice. How highly strung was Payne's organism we have again and again pointed out, but it will hardly be believed that when on 11 March, 1911, Parsley gave the expected notice, his master turned white and fainted.

I, too, was sorry when I heard of the departure of that sleek-looking impassive janitor whom I had come to regard as much a part of the establishment as the little Chinaman

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 80.

² I had told him that a hot bath usually helped me in such cases.

or even as Payne himself. Parsley, too, one thinks, must sometimes have regretted the change.

By this time Payne's cat Top, who was aged, had lost its teeth, and a visitor to Mortimer Crescent suggested that it should be destroyed.

"Have it destroyed!" burst out Payne in astonishment, "I wonder you did not ask me to have my grandmother destroyed when she was in the same condition." A little later, however, Top dealt with the difficulty himself, for he died at the advanced age of eighteen.

In May 1911 Payne and the Nix family were agitated about a certain kitten which belonged to Payne and which, as it had one eye closed, had received the appropriate name of Polyphemus. Imagining that it was not a real Persian Payne (in no very generous mood) presented it to Mrs. Nix. Next time he saw it, however, he was astonished at its beauty, for it had turned out to be a pure bred.

"I didn't know," he said, "that it was going to be like this. You must let me have it back again."

And he had it. But then he was a poet, and poets should always be given everything they ask for. They are the only sort of children that can be indulged without danger of being spoilt.

In the summer of 1911 Payne, Mrs. Pritchard and Miss Brereton visited Lynton, Lynmouth and Clovelly and parts of Gloucestershire.

By the end of the year the *Heine* was in the hands of the subscribers. It was prefaced by the poem entitled "A Grave at Montmartre," which had first appeared in the selection called *The Descent of the Dove* (see pages 125 and 131).

In this powerful original poem Payne represents a staid and unusually phlegmatic Englishman shaking his head at such productions as Heine's :

"Heine's not the man," you say, "for me,
Tennyson or Kipling is my poet.
If I must be plagued with poetry
Let me have it as at home they grow it.

*

*

*

"Something sapid, cut and come again,
 On the tickled palate such as lingers ;
 Not like Heine, jam who gives you, then
 Raps you with the spoon upon the fingers ;

* * *

"Verse (*sec. me*) should be a proper guest
 For the table of the virtuous thickhead ;
 Heine's muse was mostly half-undrest,
 Seldom sober, generally wicked."

Turning upon the good dullard Payne admits that
 Heine,

Was a tropic weed, whose flaming blooms
 Now rose-fragrant were, now henbane-sickly ;
 In accordance with life's lights and glooms,
 Lily-soft it showed or aloe-prickly.

But the rose is a foul-feeder, lilies spring from the marish-
 mud, and the sea in which we dive for pearls and coral is
 astir with monsters. Nature's fashions were good enough
 for him. So for ending,

Here he lies, her singer every inch :
 See, the very blossoms seem to know it.
 Go, thy ways, du dummer, dieker Mensch !¹
 What hast thou to do with flowers or poet ?

To give a just idea of the poetical beauty, the nimble-
 ness of execution, the surprises, the humour, the irony,
 the grace and the pathos of the *Heine* is impossible. The
 work itself must be read. Beside it, all other renderings
 of this poet are wooden and sapless. Payne has caught
 the very spirit of the tender, airy, mocking, fantastic
 Jew ; and yet, wonderful as has been his achievement,
 he has really done no more for Heine than he did for
 Villon, Boccaccio and Hafiz. In short, all are classics.
 The following delightful presentment of Heine at his
 sweetest is as light and lovely as a soap bubble ; but none
 but Payne could have given it both rondure and iridescence
 and have set it sailing in our sweet English air :

¹ You stupid, fat fellow.

ANGELS¹*(in an Album).*

Doubting Thomas, I, in Heaven
 I believe not, for our home,
 Promised by the Churches Seven
 Of Jerusalem and Rome.

But for angels, of their being,
 In good sooth, I doubted ne'er ;
 Light shapes faultless, for our seeing,
 Still upon the earth they fare.

Only wings I, gracious lady,
 To these beings must deny ;
 Marry, there are wingless angels,
 As full often seen have I.

Lovesome, with their shining glances,
 With their tender hands of white,
 Man they shield and ward mischance's
 Arrows from the luckless wight.

Each with kindness unabated
 Solace they, but most of all
 Him, that double trouble freighted
 One, whom men the poet call.

The following is Payne's rendering of the *Mit Rosen, Cypressen und Flittergold*.²

With roses and eypress and flittergold
 This book, as a coffer the dead to hold,
 I fain was to garnish full fair and fine
 And coffin therein these songs of mine.

O might I therein Love, too, enclose !
 The flow'ret of peace on Love's grave grows ;
 There blows it and thence one plucks the bloom ;
 But for me it blows only upon my tomb.

Here now are my songs, so wild that erst,
 As a flood of lava from Etna, burst,
 From the deepest depths of my soul welled out
 And blazing embers that rained about.

¹ Vol. ii. p. 337.² Vol. i. p. 27.

Now mute and stirless as death they lie ;
 Cloud-cold and pallid they are to spy ;
 But the old fire glows in their veins once more,
 If once Love's spirit above them soar.

Foreweenings many wax loud at heart,
 Love's spight once thaweth the ice apart ;
 Once cometh this booklet unto thy hand,
 My sweetest love, in a distant land.

Then loosed will the song and the sorcery be ;
 The death-pale letters will gaze at thee,
 Will wistful look in thy lovesome eyes
 And whisper of love that never dies.

With a poem of this kind Payne was in full sympathy,
 for his own muse, like Heine's, was volcanic.

How charmingly again Payne translates *Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne*.

The rose and the lily, the sun and the dove,
 These all, in Love's rapture, erewhen did I love.
 I love them no longer : now love I alone
 My slight one, my bright one, my white one, my own :
 For she, who the fount of all love is, in one
 Herself rose and lily and dove is and sun.¹

As an example of a poem of an entirely different character may be given "To the Young"² :

Be thou not bubbled, be thou not troubled
 By golden apples cast in thy track !
 The swords are clanging, the bowstrings twanging,
 But nothing holdeth the hero back.

A bold beginning is half the winning :
 An Alexander the world doth seize :
 No long debating ! The queens awaiting
 Already the conqueror are on their knees.

We win by daring : the old King heiring,
 We mount Darius's bed and throne.
 Perdition glorious ! O death victorious,
 With triumph drunken, in Babylon !

¹ Vol. i. p. 63.

² Vol. ii. p. 340.

In the long poems Payne is no less successful. He shines in the comie and uproarious "Rhampsinitus,"¹ in the sly and caustic story of the white elephant's love for the big woman² and in Heine's Swan Song, the inexpressibly beautiful *Für die Mouche*, sometimes called "The Passion Flower."³

It will be supposed that the whole of lettered England rose and warmly welcomed so magnificent a work. But no. It was received in absolute silence. Not a single review of it appeared. As far as the journalistic world was concerned, it might never have been written. And why? Nobody knows. Among those to whom Payne presented copies of his *Heine*, was his sister Nora. It was inscribed, amusingly enough: "Miss Payne, from John Payne."

About this time I once more urged him to abandon his life of a recluse. I said: "You lose in two ways. In the first place the whole world is hungering for personal sympathy and encouragement; by mixing with it you would have opportunities, otherwise denied to you, of administering both. In the second you yourself would benefit. It would do you real good to become better acquainted with the joys and sorrows of others. It would make your own troubles seem lighter." But my words fell on deaf ears.

As regards music, Wagner still continued in high favour with him, but he also expressed himself partial to some of the compositions of Rubenstein, Mendelssohn and Coleridge Taylor.

"He did not care much," says Miss Brereton, "for Beethoven, whom he looked upon as the precursor of modern music—a man who saw and pointed the way to the Promised Land, though unable to reach it himself. He was very fond, however, of a few of Beethoven's sonatas, and of one in particular. I think it was in the key of B. I went with him to the Albert Hall, in order to hear a Russian play it. He was delighted. We heard it

¹ Vol. ii. p. 235.

² Vol. ii. p. 238 "The White Elephant."

³ Vol. iii. p. 228.



MISS NORA PAYNE, 1894.

From a photograph.

[To face p. 238.]

rendered subsequently by Hanbrug, but Mr. Payne said it was just like a schoolboy's performance after the Russian's."

"If," said Payne, to Miss Brereton, "I had not given my life to translation and poetry I should have become a composer of music. Orchestral music would have been my work." "He played," commented Miss Brereton, "adorably."

I am glad to be able to give the opinion of others in respect to this side of Payne, for my own ignorance of music is pitiable. He sometimes played to me the very finest pieces (so he said) such as were sufficient "to raise a mortal to the skies" or "draw an angel down"; but I must have been neither a mortal nor an angel, for the only feeling they excited in me was one of disquietude lest he should perceive that I was profoundly bored.

On 21 October, 1911, Payne "had a great shock in hearing of the sudden death"¹ of his "old friend," Mrs. Hutt; and on 7 December of the same year he lost another valued friend, Sir George Lewis.

¹ Letter to Mrs. Nix, 23 October, 1911.

CHAPTER XIX

TABLE TALK OF THE YEAR 1912

THE WAY OF THE WINEPRESS

(unpublished).

IN the spring of 1912 Payne had a new and splendid access of poetry—the verses produced being those which he ultimately included in *The Way of the Winepress*, a volume which was passing through the press at the time of his death.

On 6 June I called at Mortimer Crescent and had tea and dined with him. I spoke of the pleasure I had derived from the *Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*, describing it as one of the three or four most stimulating books in the world, and I said I had read everything I could by her and about her.

But he was just then in one of his tearing moods, and he toppled down one after another some of my best idols. Marie Bashkirtseff, Blake and FitzGerald were the first to fall. He called Marie Bashkirtseff “as depraved a piece of neurotic conceit as you would ever find.”

“Her *Journal*,” I said, “is crowded with stimulating passages, for example *On ne peut pas mal faire quelque chose qui vous remplit l’âme* [It is impossible to do badly that which fills your soul]. Every man is in love with some dead woman, and I have lost my heart to Marie Bashkirtseff.”

My serious condition, however, failed to move him, and he declined to withdraw his strictures on her. Indeed,

he was not in the habit of withdrawing anything at any time. What he had said, he had said.

His attack on Marie Bashkirtseff was bad enough, but when he dubbed her gifted translator (Mathilde Blind) "a mourning coach-horse," I thought it advisable to change the subject, so I ventured on a word in praise of D. G. Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel."

Payne threw off with, "I once said to Rossetti, you are like the fat boy in *Pickwick*, you try to make our flesh creep"; and he continued: "Rossetti was a man of talent not of genius; Swinburne was a man of uncontrollable genius, of fantastic spontaneity. Rossetti squeezed out a little bit now and then. He laboured at his work. He would write a sonnet twelve times. There was no spontaneity in him. No, his work doesn't show inspiration. Inspiration is a flame that 'bloweth where it listeth.'"

T. W. The seraph of the sanctuary touches the lips of the inspired man with a live coal.¹

P. Yes, that is so. The man of genius is on the tripod. The man of genius never succeeds in his lifetime. Schopenhauer is absolutely inspired when he gets upon this subject.

Rossetti's name occurring again, Payne said: "Rossetti's books were machined—puffed," and then he made use of the saying that was so often in his mouth: "No work succeeds entirely on its own merits."

Of Tennyson he spoke contemptuously, but I can best illustrate his attitude to that poet by quoting the *Autobiography*, where he says: "Tennyson I knew indeed, but (with a few great exceptions, such as parts of *Maud* and the 'Wellington Ode' in which he soared above his habitual defects) cared little for. With all his great qualities, he has always seemed to me no poet of the first order; he owed his popularity mainly to the way in which he pandered to the weaknesses of the intellectually lower classes and to his cunning fashion of idealizing the grossest gospel of disguised materialism in crass optimism. A French critic, on his death, described him as more a

¹ I was thinking of Isaiah vi. 7.

producer of popular chromolithographs than a true artist; nor am I inclined to quarrel with this description of him."

To continue our conversation: "I hate," said I, "the term now so much used—women-poets."

P. Why not merely say "poets?" The word applies to both sexes.

T. W. Yes, but when you wish to distinguish between them, I mean. I prefer the term "poetesses."

P. It is certainly better than women-poets.

T. W. But I need not have brought up the subject for there are no poetesses. (By this I did not mean that no Englishwoman has written charming verse, but that none has attained high rank as a poet.)

P. Oh, yes, there are. There's Christina Rossetti, for example. She is a better poet than her brother.¹

T. W. I don't agree with you.

P. Nietzsche was a very great man, I think him greater every year. I have his seventeen volumes, in German,² of course, always at my elbow. I take his philosophy as a stimulant, not as a system. Nietzsche's notes for his philosophy are the high-water mark of modern literature—"Ah! Mother nature!" he interjected pathetically, "She let Gladstone live to eighty-nine, and cut off Nietzsche at forty-four!"³ He then dilated on Nietzsche's extreme originality of thought, and said: "He has put the problems of life in a new way. He made a revaluation of all ideas of morality. Bacon says: 'Morals are a fable agreed upon.' Nietzsche is the only man who has pursued that remark to its logical conclusion. Nietzsche is a poet as well as a philosopher. You remember that saying of his: 'True ideality is to see the glories of a sun-rise where a taper is lighted.'" ⁴

While we were at tea (or rather while I was, for he

¹ In the letter to Mrs. Robinson, 26 February, 1913 (No. 3 of the series) he had said of Rossetti: "He, though not a great, was a true poet."

² He called German "the most formless and ill-digested of languages."

³ Nietzsche (1844-1900) reached fifty-six, but only as a breathing corpse, incapable of thought or action.

⁴ In *The Way of the Winepress* Payne has a sonnet on this subject—"Ideality."

only sat and rolled or smoked the eternal cigarette) he said: "This blend is the result of practice. It consists of four teas. After mixing them I leave them for six months hermetically sealed, in order that they may amalgamate. Do you like the bread?"

T. W. Yes, it is crisp and sweet, and above all it is well baked.

P. It is standard bread. I have threatened the bakeress, if she does not bake it enough, to give her a warm corner in a future state near Gladstone.

I defended Gladstone as a man of taste, and ventured to observe that at any rate he introduced the *Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff* to the English public. It transpired, however, that Gladstone had no virtues at all, so with the object of leading the conversation to a loftier subject I inquired after the cats.

P. Poor Top died last year, aged eighteen. D'Indy (referred to in the poems as Dandie¹) is six and in his prime. He is named after D'Indy, the great modern French composer, and on account of his aloofness. D'Indy the composer writes for himself, and cares not a pin what the world thinks of his compositions. At this moment the cat we were discussing walked unconcernedly into the room and settled himself on a cushion. "See," observed Payne, "he is looking into space—into Africa, as Dickens would have said."²

T. W. I hope he doesn't touch the birds in your garden.

P. No, he's too well-bred for that.

T. W. I've taken to keeping cavies—guinea pigs—tortoise and white. I like to see them running about on my lawn. Besides, they keep it mown. It is a mistake to suppose that cavies are stupid animals. I find mine very intelligent.

P. No animal is stupid if you cultivate it. A donkey is a philosopher—a mistrustful philosopher."³

A reference to Mrs. Hutt led him to say, "Mrs. Hutt

¹ Top, Dandie live; but Robin, Partie, Rover
Shireen and Mick, their earthly ills are over.

Carol and Cadence, p. 74.

² An allusion to Mrs. Jellyby in *Bleak House*.

³ Cf. "the philosophic beast" of *Carol and Cadence*, p. 70.

is dead, and her daughter is married.”¹ He then asked me to dine with him and Mrs. Pritchard at her house Cleve Lodge, 40 Hyde Park Gate, observing: “She will be glad to see you. She was deeply interested in your *Life of Burton*. I read all my poems to her. We are devoted to each other. My other sisters, Nora and Frances (Mrs. Byam) I do not see so often. Harry, my younger brother, is still practising as a solicitor. Think of it, no newspaper would take *Ibn et Tefrid!* You remember.”

T. W. Yes, and I was glad you omitted some of the stanzas and modified others.

Of Blake he said: “Blake achieved most success by his illustrations to Young’s *Night Thoughts*.”

“Possibly,” I replied, “but they are by no means his most brilliant work. His Prophetical Books interest me more than anything else he did, and the text is even more fascinating than the illustrations. It bristles with stimulating passages. If ever there was a man inspired, it was Blake.”

P. No, no. Blake took the rough side of Dante and did not catch his sublimity.

T. W. Blake was more influenced by the Minor Prophets² than by Dante.

He then showed me, with satisfaction, some large Japanese pictures in mother-of-pearl, metal, etc., and a cocoa-nut mounted in ebony on an ebony elephant which he had just bought.

“You will be glad to know,” he said, while we were looking at them, “that I have had a new and splendid rush of poetry, chiefly sonnets. They will appear in my forthcoming book, which is to be called *The Way of the Winepress*. You remember Isaiah 63, verse 3, ‘I have trodden the winepress alone.’”

T. W. You have enlarged the scope of the sonnet more than any other poet. Your sonnets have the elevation of lyrics. You must have written 500.

P. Yes, I suppose I have, but although many are lyrical I keep strictly to the fourteen lines and the rhyme

¹ She is now Mrs. Vinter.

² Minor, of course, only in the sense that their books are short.

scheme. I never permit any looseness in that. I have adapted every kind of rhyme into the sonnet form.

T. W. No other poet has used so felicitously the double rhyme. Swinburne comes next.

P. Of the older writers, William Dunbar and other successors of Chaucer used it. Spenser and Dante, among poets, have inspired me most. I translated Dante, as you know, before I was twenty. I destroyed my translation three years ago.

He then talked about musicians and said: "It is not talent we need but genius. Elgar has no musical genius whatever. He has immense talent. We require not talent but genius. The bad ruins the public taste."

T. W. You can't have weeds and flowers too.

P. A very good illustration.

He then read me a number of the poems that were to appear in *The Way of the Winepress*, including "Introit," "A Light Age," "The Lost Lyre," "They shall be called by a New Name," "Morning Glory" and "*Ars Moriendi*" (The Art of Dying).

T. W. This last is sad and yet not sad.

P. It is exalted—that's the expression [and he repeated one of the lines "Their plumes funereal in the wind swept ways"].

T. W. A vivid and musical line.

P. These poems are in the interstellar air.

T. W. They are cheerful. Nay, they have a persistent joyousness.

P. Say, rather, exaltation, other worldliness, beyond joy and pain—in Nietzsche's phrase *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*.

He then read "Except a Corn of Wheat," "Life's Reckoning" and "Dreams of Eld."

T. W. There is so much in them that is quotable.

P. A whole philosophy is concentrated in almost any one of the sonnets.

T. W. They make your former sonnets seem almost bald.

P. Mrs. Pritchard has heard them again and again. She is never tired of listening to them.

T. W. You describe them as interstellar and super-stellar. These words are alike.

P. Very nearly, not quite. He then read the fine sonnet called "Ideality" (founded on the saying of Nietzsche already alluded to) and "A New Commandment"—"That which thou dost do lightly; live thy life out as the linnet sings."

Again I observed that there was a wonderful joyousness about them all, but he would not allow the term, his thoughts were still "stitched to the stars."

"Say exaltation," he added "if you like."

T. W. Your life is the ordinary poet's turned backwards. You end where others begin. Most poets have done their best work in the early days. Yours has been done in the evening of life.

This remark pleased him, and he said: "Yes, no doubt about it." He then read the sunshiny and autobiographical "Joy." "As a boy," he commented, "I delighted chiefly in the beauties of nature and 'the poet's perfect word'; as a man my chief pleasure has been to feel the seeds of song unfold in myself." He then read "The Last Prayer," "Resurrection," which I thoroughly disliked, and told him so, "The Whirligig" and "Some Day," in reference to which he said: "They will praise me when I am gone. I am my own hindrance to my fame as a poet, for I am alive. All these poems, you see, are above the earth—beyond the reach of good and evil." He then took up "Thought and Speech," observing before he began it "This is a tremendous one," and he subsequently read "Life's Motive Force" which is on the subject of Imagination—perhaps the finest poem in the volume—"Consistency," "The Lode Star," and "Drunk or Sober" which runs as follows:

DRUNK OR SOBER ¹

Drunkenness (old Hafiz 'twas that said)

Drunkenness is better than dead dryness.

In this world of rottenness and wryness,

Where the sage is silent as the dead,

¹ This sonnet appeared subsequently, by permission, in my article on Payne in *The Academy*, and it has often been reprinted since in the John Payne Society circulars.

Where the Gods among the folk might tread
 And be no more noted for their highness,
 In this day when lowness scoffs at highness,
 Better drunk than sober go to bed.
 Either aching heart or aching head ;
 Take thy choice, O servant of the Highest ;
 Siek at heart and sober, with the Real
 All thy life to languish, or, instead,
 Day and night to be, until thou diest,
 Drunken with the wine of the Ideal.

He then read "Horses of the Sun," "The Sower," and "*Etiam si omnes, ego non*," the sonnet on the subject of Job's words "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him," against which sonnet I stoutly protested both at the time and subsequently. I have always judged that it was written just after his letter to me on Pessimism.¹ The next poems were the beautiful "Love for Love," "The Unknown God," "New Lamps for Old." Here he interjected: "The best faith is that without a priest, a faith that is pure of the poisonous parasite," a remark that reminded me of his friend Arbuthnot's saying on the same subject. He then read "The Kingdom of Heaven is Within You," "Sly Nature," "*Coelum non animum*,"² "*Procul este!*" founded on Aeneid VI. 258, and "A Poisonous Heritage." "Here," he interjected, "is a thing that has never been said before." Then he read "The Salt of Life," in which he insists once more upon the necessity of humour and laughter, "The Turn of the Tide," "The Restless Dead," "The Last Strength," on the subject of the "inexpugnable city of the soul," "Buried Cities," "The Lonely Harvester" and "Song and Sacrament." "This," he commented, "is the poet's sacrament, you know—that which abideth, 'but not the aspiring of thy soul,'" and he spoke of himself as a pantheist.

T. W. They are all huge subjects.

P. They are tremendous, aren't they? They will amaze some people.

T. W. They are all heavy with thought.

¹ See p. 218.

² Horace Ep., Bk. I, Ep. XI.

P. Yes, for the immediate understanding. They want study.

The next sonnet "*Nil nisi bonum*"¹ gave me great pleasure, not only because it was written with the knowledge that I was engaged upon a biography of him, but also because it showed that his views as to how a biography ought to be written corresponded precisely with my own. In connection with it he said: "A man's failings as well as his great qualities should be recorded. The dead man belongs to history. He is not the property of any particular class or church." Then he read "Whom ye ignorantly worship, we the world's dream interpreters declare," "Divine things are not to be taken by storm"² and "Illusive Thought."

T. W. These sonnets are heavy with meaning, but now and again there is a jarring note. I refer to some of the references to the Deity.

He made no comment, but read "Dream and Vision," "Towards Appeasement," "The Last Inn," "Song and Sacrament," "Leconte de Lisle," and finally the autobiographical and pathetic "Moth Flights."

T. W. Interstellar is a fine word.

P. Yes, it's a word I pretty often use.

I can see him now reading these poems, his sixteenth-century face, his gray silk cap, his black eyebrows, his gray beard—the magenta pocket handkerchief, the orange tie, the flimsy folio manuscript. He was within two months of seventy. While he read a blackbird was piping in the garden.

The notes of that blackbird are still in my ear.

With trails of glory to his grave escorted,
The sun hath set ;
The light fades fast : but from the boughs unthwarted
By his poetic rapture still transported
The blackbird warbles yet.³

¹ *De vivis nil nisi bonum.*

² Title subsequently altered to its Latin equivalent "*Divina non expugnanda.*"

³ *Carol and Cadence*, p. 48.

He then said: "I intend as a motto for the book a line in Shelley's 'Adonais' running something like 'I soared out of the body of this death.'" On turning the passage out he found that the exact words were, "He has out-soared the shadow of our night."

I asked him what progress he had made with the new translation *Seif ben Dhi Yezn*, but I judged from his reply that he had scarcely begun it.

About this time the editor of *The Academy* asked me to write for that periodical an Appreciation of Payne, and on 18 June Payne, at my request, sent me copies of the two sonnets "Horses of the Sun" and "Drunk and Sober," for insertion in it.¹ At the same time he presented me with the proof sheets of the *Heine*. He was particularly pleased about the article, because he had been under the impression that *The Academy* was one of the periodicals that were prejudiced against him, "The Academy opening," he said, "really looks promising, and it's a good omen that this is Waterloo day."

I may note here that Payne was a great noticer of coincidences, and certainly in his own life, as elsewhere pointed out, some curious coincidences occurred. To the fact that his first and last volumes of poetry were both stopped by a war between France and Germany I have already alluded. I recall one other coincidence. The galley proof of my *Life of Burton*, Section 104, was corrected by Payne on 28 November, 1905. On it occurs the sentence "Payne . . . wrote on November 28 (1881) to Burton, and using the words *Tantus labor non sit cassus* suggested collaboration." Payne pencilled underneath: "28 November, 1905, curious coincidence."

When I sent him the MS. of *The Academy* article he suggested a few alterations and enclosed for insertion in it a copy of "Introit" from *The Way of the Winepress*, observing: "It would, I think, be advisable to speak of my 'short poems' instead of 'sonnets.' Sonnet is a word of fear to the unthinking herd."

When he wrote to me on 24 June,² the quotation from Shelley was still in his thoughts, for he spoke of himself

¹ Only the latter was used.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 85.

as having "outsoared the shadow of our night" and as having "passed beyond the mist and mire of our work-a-day world of trade and truckle into a purer and serener air, a region where, as Rabelais says, 'the call of the cook is heard no more.'"

On 12 August, 1912, I founded the Blake Society, but Payne was not interested, and he would never allow Blake any particular merit.

In August and September Payne, Mrs. Pritchard and Miss Brereton went on a motoring tour through Warwick, Gloucestershire, Wales and Derbyshire.

On 14 September my article "John Payne and his Work" appeared in *The Academy*, and when Payne returned from his tour he found awaiting him a letter from me with a copy of the periodical, and also a letter from my friend Professor P. Berger,¹ of Bordeaux, author of *William Blake, Mysticism et Poesie*.¹ He wrote to me 15 September²: "Many thanks for *The Academy* article which reads very well, also for all your zeal on my behalf, zeal, I am afraid, wasted on so hopeless a subject. I am now writing to M. Berger."

The letter, which is dated 15 September, 1912, ran: "I find your letter awaiting me on my return last night from a month's motoring tour, hence the delay in acknowledging your great kindness in writing to me and in assuring you that I shall feel a particular pleasure in adding your name to the long list of distinguished Frenchmen whose friendship and sympathy have been among the most precious memories of my life. Alas! of most of them but memories remain; 'all *mes fideles de Paris*,' as Banville called himself and others, Leconte de Lisle, Mallarmé, Villiers [de l'Isle Adam], Manet, etc., etc., are gone. Cazalis, who died last year, was the last of them; and the younger generation have little attraction for a 'Romantic impénitent' like myself. Apropos of the younger generation, you will be interested to know

¹ M. Berger sent me a copy of this work on 4 September, 1912. It has since been translated into English by Mr. Daniel H. Conner, member of the Blake Society.

² *Letters to T. W.*, No. 86.



MRS. PRITCHARD, PAYNE'S FAVOURITE SISTER.

From a photograph by Rita Martin.



that I am half-way through the third instalment (volumes 7 and 8) of my *Flowers of France*, dealing with 'The Latter Days,' Coppée to Paul Fort. This, if I live, will in due course be followed by volumes 1 and 2, 'The Beginnings,' Châtelain de Coucy to Mellin de St. Gellais, and Volume 4, 'The Dark Ages,' Malherbe to André Chenier, completing the work and forming a complete anthology of French verse."

On 15 September I received a letter from Mrs. Pritchard in which she expressed her "sincere appreciation" of my efforts in her brother's behalf, and she invited me to lunch with her on 22 November.

I duly arrived at Cleeve Lodge¹ on that date, and had lunch and tea with her and her sister Nora.

Payne himself was to have joined us, but for some reason or other he did not put in an appearance. I often recall this my first interview with the Golden Sister. She was queenly in appearance, and if of the beauty of her early days only traces were left, still such as she was, so she was. Like her brother she hated hypocrisy. How the subject arose I forget, but I happened to say that some elderly ladies resorted to subterfuges which not only did not make them look younger but which thoroughly spoilt them. She smiled and spoke with pity of an old lady of her own acquaintance who used hair dye and cosmetics. Mrs. Pritchard was authoritative, otherwise she would not have been Payne's sister. I was charmed with her conversation and her devotion to her brother, and I was impressed by her ability as a literary critic. She told me for the purposes of this work the story of Payne's early days, Nora now and again swooping in upon the conversation—stormy petrel as she was—and disappearing as suddenly.

When I mentioned the differences Payne and I had on the subjects, in particular, of Providence and William Blake, she smiled and said simply, "I know."

I wrote to Payne on 27 November (1912) as follows: "I spent on Saturday a most delightful afternoon with Mrs. Pritchard. If you don't mind my saying so, it was

¹ 40, Hyde Park Gate.

really better without you, as we were able to talk about you and your work with greater freedom. I think of reprinting *The Academy* article. Please look over it and return it to me when you have corrected the errors.

"The editor has left out one sentence, so it reads as though your cat, and not you, were master of and had translated from fifteen languages. I think the world has treated you pretty badly. First it gave Burton the honour of being the translator of the *Arabian Nights*, and now it makes your cat (D'Indy) the author of the rest of your Translations. Nothing remains for it except to father your original poems on somebody else. . . . To go back to D'Indy, it appears that he is also an accomplished musician. This made all of us here laugh so heartily that I almost forgave the editor for the mistake. It is fortunate that you also have a sense of humour."

Payne replied on 28 November (1912)¹ enclosing the article with corrections and suggestions, and I had it reprinted and issued in connection with the John Payne Society. He says: "I expect to-morrow to have finished the new book *The Latter Days*, volumes 7 and 8 of *Flowers of France*. Two volumes written and fair copied in a little more than four months' time! Somewhat of a record I think.

"You told me some time ago that you knew Herbert Jenkins, the publisher. What do you think of proposing to him *Ibn et Tefrid* (the second edition, of course)? Young publishers are often enterprising."

On 30 November, 1912,² he wrote to me: "*The Latter Days* (printer's copy) finished yesterday. I feel inclined to throw it into the fire. What is the good!"

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 87.

² *Id.*, No. 88.

CHAPTER XX

FLOWERS OF FRANCE, THE LATTER DAYS

1913

PAYNE continued to be often cheered by enthusiastic letters from Mr. Tracy Robinson,¹ whose friendship I, too, by this time was privileged to enjoy. Writing to me 27 August, 1908, Mr. Robinson had said: "I love Mr. Payne to-day as always, and read him whenever I am athirst for the beautiful. I never tire of him." On 6 February, 1913, he says of Payne's poems: "Over and over again I turn to them. I love them, and in my old age (I am in my eightieth year) they solace me beyond measure. I have your *Life of Sir Richard Burton*, and value it greatly. Mr. Payne gave it to me."

On 22 April the Cowper Society, of which I was, and still am, secretary, held a meeting at the Mansion House, the Lord Mayor (Sir David Burnet) being in the chair. There was a very large attendance, and in my speech I mentioned Payne's services to the Society and the circumstances which led him to write the poem "Cowper and Newton," which was then recited by Miss Margaret Omar, the gifted actress and elocutionist.

On 25 April, 1913, I spent the evening with Payne, and he read to me a number of poems from *The Latter Days*, which a little later was issued in two volumes. He then spoke of his original poems and said: "I never write poetry except when I can't help it. I had two great gaps, as you know—one from 1880 to 1902 and another from 1909 to 1911."

¹ Mr. Robinson last saw Payne at the end of 1910. He called at Mortimer Crescent.

After referring to the *Birmingham Post* review of *Carol and Cadence*, he said: "Write to the author¹ and say that I will send him an advance copy of *The Way of the Winepress*. I should appreciate a general article on my poetry—my poetry as a whole—from his pen." He then read his sonnet on Beddoes from *Flower o' the Thorn*,² and while he was reading it I noticed that he kept a piece of cotton wool between his fingers. He said he had cut himself with the coal-hod. "In Beddoes," he observed, "we have united Hell's red gloom and Heaven's blithe blue and gold." He then read "The Sanctuary Lamps,"³ "Organ Dancers,"⁴ and "Faces."⁵

T. W. The thoughts are very beautiful.

P. They are idealizations of the commonest things in London.

T. W. Was not your "Rime of Redemption" suggested by Bürger's "Lenore"?

P. The crude idea is in Bürger, but Bürger did not work it out. A good idea is not worked out.

All the time he was reading or talking he kept fidgeting with the cotton wool.

He then took up the MS. of *The Latter Days*, and said: "There are more real poets in France than in any other country *now*," putting great emphasis on the *now*. "The modern English poets haven't learnt the keyboard."

He then read "The Dove," by Louis Bouilhet—a poem about the Emperor Julian.

"The Romantic School," he said, "was born in 1820. Since that time France has given to the world its deepest poetry."

T. W. When did you compose these translations?

P. In a motor car during my summer holiday in 1912 with Mrs. Pritchard.

T. W. You do not often write poems on places.

P. No. Place poems are too mechanical. I never write them.

T. W. You forget the "Grave at Montmartre."

¹ I would gladly give his name, but he prefers to remain incognito.

² P. 135.

³ *Flower o' the Thorn*, p. 131.

⁴ *Id.*, p. 65.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 63.

P. That is not, strictly speaking, a place poem. Very little of it concerns the grave itself. I began it in 1864. I struck off six stanzas and then put it aside. It was finished at a flash in 1902. It is my finest lyric.

T. W. 1864-1902, what a tremendous distance between conception and execution !

P. Take my advice, never force yourself. By wishing a thing too much you run flat opposite to it. Let nature do as she likes.

T. W. You have certainly followed this rule.

P. My work since 1902 is incomparably superior to any done before. The long silence of twenty-two years allowed all the thoughts of life to germinate. The mind was long lying fallow.

I spoke of having lunched with some one, I forget whom.

P. Lunch is an unholy meal. I never take it. Then, with a slight guffaw, "It is not in the Bible," and as he said it he rolled a cigarette in his usual wasteful way.

T. W. How about smoking ?

P. Oh, that *is* in the Bible. "The Lord smoked in Zion." ¹

T. W. In the Bible or out of it, smoking is a very bad habit, but I am afraid I shall never cure you of it. To return to literature, I once said to Watts-Dunton : "I have been having a little argument with a friend of mine as to whether there is a standard in literature. My friend said : 'There is no standard.' Watts-Dunton flew at me, and said 'What nonsense ! You might as well say Two and two do not make four.' What view do you take of this question ? In literary matters who shall judge ?"

P. There is no court of appeal in literary matters. There is no public with taste.

T. W. The English are less emotional than the French.

P. We are a very hysterical people, the most sentimental people in the world, but we try to hide our senti-

¹ A reference to Ps. 74, verses 1 and 2.

mentality—we try to hide it under a mask of reserve. We are ashamed of it.

T. W. Everybody nowadays goes to look at football matches—everybody, I mean, except you and me—20,000 at the football match at the Palace the other day.

P. Great burly idiots! As it was in Isaiah's days, so it is *now*, with emphasis on the *now*: "They sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play" (a rather comical application of Isaiah v. 11 and 12, but precisely in Payne's manner).

T. W. I rather think it's the betting that is the chief attraction.

P. "Hop-scotch and pitch-and-toss,"¹ he said contemptuously, "banish both, one to Scotland and the other to Ireland."

He then read to me some passages in his *Humoristica, Second Series*, that were complimentary to neither of the two countries.

T. W. I have just been reading Sandys' *Ovid* and Philemon Holland's *Suetonius*.

P. I place them on a level with North's *Plutarch*—or nearly on a level.

I said that during this interview Payne read to me portions of *The Latter Days*. Among the poems in volume 1 of this work are selections from the output of his old friends: Henri Cazalis (1840–1909),² to whom the book is dedicated; Maurice Bouchor (1885–) and François Coppée (1842–1910). Barbey D'Aureville (1808–1889) is represented by "Hatred of the Sun," Emile Blémont (1839–) by "Panthéism," and the deeply pathetic "In Memory of a Child." Perhaps the most striking poem in the first volume is "The Dove," by Louis Bouilhet. It is a story of the Emperor Julian—the reviver of the worship of the Olympian gods—who is pictured standing lost in contemplation by the ruins of a pagan temple. Prostrate marble columns strew the cracked pavement,

¹ Payne's contemptuous names for football and cricket.

² To whose memory the work is dedicated.

High grasses climbed the walls and girt each statue's waist ;
Storks sat and dreamed upon the shoulders of the gods.

As he stood sunk in thought, the last priest laid on the last altar the last burnt-offering—a dove. In imagination the poet sees the downfall in its turn of the Catholic religion, and the scene of the ruined temple, the priest, and the offering is repeated. Very delightful is "The Smile" of Charles Fuster:

One cannot always laugh, but one
Come what there may, can always smile.

Volume 2 contains selections from Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), Catulle Mendès (1842–1910), and many other poets. From Edouard Pailleron (1834–1899) is taken a powerful little poem on "Pride," which commences :

My life's chief weapon is my pride indomitable,
The anchor of my faith, my work's foundation stone.

Powerful, too, by reason of its irony, is "The Three Fairies" by Jean Rameau (1859–). The first wicked spirit bestows on a sleeping child the misfortune of ugliness, the second the horror of leprosy. The third, deeming these curses insufficient, conceives of something that will bring infinitely more misery than either. She gives him genius!

The last poem in the book is Henri Warnery's¹ sonnet "The Impossible," in which it is insisted that we should strive toward a great goal, even though it is inaccessible; for it is better to be vanquished "than never to have striven."

So ends a book that teems with live poetry, curious art, and unforgettable phrases.

On 15 May, 1913,² I heard again from Mrs. Pritchard. She complained bitterly that in (Sir) Arthur Quiller-Couch's *Book of Victorian Verse* Payne is represented

¹ Henri Warnery (1859–1902).

² *Letters of Mrs. Pritchard to T. W.*, No. 5.

by "the feeblest specimens of his youthful period." There had been a passage of arms between Payne and Quiller-Couch over some article of Payne's, and Mrs. Pritchard went so far as to say: "I imagine that was purposely done out of revenge . . . for my brother's expression of anti-arrivist and anti-radical principles and methods." Probably she was wrong in her assumption, but the remark did not surprise me, seeing how outrageously Payne was used by the contemporary Press.

The John Payne Society was just then planning the issue of another selection from Payne's poems, and Mrs. Pritchard on 22 May¹ sent me the list of her favourites which she hoped would be included in the proposed publication. The following is her selection with her comments in brackets:—

"*Quia Multum Amavit*," "May Margaret," "Dedication to Wagner," "Song before the Gates of Death," "Madrigal Triste," "Aubade," "Courante," "Vocation Song," "Song of Willow," "Song's End," "Love's Autumn" (this is one of the most perfect things he wrote), "Aspect and Prospect," "Vere Novo," "Prelude to *Hafiz*," "Nocturn," "Litany," "Sunset Voices," "*De Profundis*," "Last Lullaby," "The Grave of My Songs" (one of the perfect poems), "Her Grave," "Prelude to *Flower o' the Thorn*," two poems from that lovely work *The Book of Days and Nights*, first commencing "Between the Tides of Night and Day,"² second commencing "By the Wandering Waters,"³ "*Anima cum animo*,"⁴ "A Last Toast."⁵ "The Prelude to his Translation of Heine also occurs to me as a masterpiecee."

During this year I was engaged upon a biography of Dr. Isaac Watts, but in May my eyesight failed me, and thenceforward for several years I was seriously handicapped. A meeting of the John Payne Society had been arranged to take place at Mrs. Pritchard's (Cleeve Lodge) on 23 July, but owing to my misfortune it was aban-

¹ *Letters of Mrs. Pritchard to T. W.*, No. 6.

² *Carol and Cadence*, p. 14.

³ *Id.*, p. 24.

⁴ *Id.*, p. 237.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 295.

doned. Payne, who had himself suffered with his eyes, wrote from time to time and expressed sympathy.

In the autumn of this year he, Mrs. Pritchard and Miss Brereton went to Paris, and thence took a motoring tour with the object of seeing as many cathedrals and old chateaux as possible. On their return to Paris they visited the graves of Heine,¹ Gautier,² De Banville,³ Leconte de Lisle, and other old friends or enthusiasms, and placed wreaths. “It was a lovely autumn day,” said Miss Brereton, “and it was most pathetic to see him. He betrayed so much emotion. On De Banville’s tomb are the words, ‘Come little birds, sing on my tomb,’ and there were little birds singing on it. They seemed so happy, and might have been there specially to welcome Mr. Payne.”

In the autumn of 1913 Dr. Nix fell ill, and Payne wrote on 6 September to Mrs. Nix: “I am much grieved to hear of Nix’s serious illness. Of course, it will be better for me not to come down to-morrow as usual, as I shall only be in the way; but, weather permitting, I shall probably look in for a minute or two about 7.30 to hear how the poor old chap is getting on. If I don’t come perhaps you will kindly send me a postcard, as I shall, of course, be anxious about him.”

Dr. Nix’s days, however, were numbered, and he died on 11 September.

At Christmas (1913) Payne was very ill. Miss Brereton, by Mrs. Pritchard’s desire, went at once to his house and, after nursing him there brought him in Mrs. Pritchard’s carriage to Cleeve Lodge, where he stayed several weeks.

¹ and ² Cemetery of Montmartre

³ Cemetery of Mont Parnasse.

CHAPTER XXI

HIS LAST DAYS

1914-1916

As the days lengthened Payne recovered his health, and he began to look forward to the usual feast of Saint Oyster. For some reason he determined to honour the holy personage twice that year. Perhaps it was because he was too impatient to wait till the right date. None looked forward to these functions with more pleasure than Violet (also called "Prempah"¹ on account of her short frizzy hair), Mrs. Nix's youngest daughter, whom Payne often rallied on account of her healthy appetite, a characteristic which is hinted at in Payne's note to Mrs. Nix dated 11 March, 1914: "If it will suit you and the Romeus, we may as well have the oyster supper next Sunday. Let me know by Friday at latest, also if Violet is at home, so that I may know how many oysters to order."

The supper was scarcely over before Payne began to form plans for honouring the real day—Easter Monday—which fell that year on 13 April.

On the 8th of the month he wrote to Mrs. Nix: "By this post I am ordering the J. A. & N. Stores to send you on Saturday two hundred oysters, which I hope will be as good as before. I am increasing the number, as it was rather a tight fit last time, with Violet in the field. I shall hope to see you on Sunday next, when you will probably be tolerably straight."

Evidently Mrs. Nix informed him that the party would be smaller than he had supposed, but whether or not

¹ An African king. A name given to her by Payne.

the formidable Violet made the difference is unrecorded. The following letter, dated 9 April, shows how Payne got over the difficulty :

“ DEAR MRS. NIX,—

“ Yours to hand. I have written to the Stores to tell them to deliver *one* hundred oysters only ; but in case it should be too late, owing to the holiday nuisance, and the two hundred should arrive, the only way will be to have one hundred on Sunday and one hundred on Monday. As you say, the stars in their courses seem to fight against the oyster celebration this year.”

The spring of 1914 was for me a most trying one, but in April my sight seemed to improve, though the oculist had given me no hope. Replying on 13 April, 1914,¹ to a letter of mine, Payne said : “ Glad to hear that your eyes are better. I had a severe attack of the same thing after the *Nights*, obliged to lie up for six months. Just now I am very slowly recovering from the worst bout of influenza I ever had. It has knocked me all to pieces, and I do not expect, at my age, ever really to get over the effects, which have greatly aggravated all my infirmities. You are comparatively young, and so have a better chance.

“ No more verse, nor (as far as I can see) any likelihood of more.”

On Saturday, 6 June, 1914, died Theodore Watts-Dunton,² at the advanced age of eighty-two.

In the summer Payne and Mrs. Pritchard, with Miss Brereton, went for a motor tour all over Devonshire, making their headquarters Dunster and Ashburton, and through the south of Gloucestershire.

It will be remembered that Payne's first volume, *Intaglios*, was stopped by the war which broke out between France and Germany in 1870. By a remarkable coincidence his last volume of original poetry, *The Way of the Winepress*, was also stopped by war between the same two countries—the war which broke

¹ *Letters to T. W.*, No. 90.

² He was born in 1832. He married in 1905 Clara Jane Reich.

out in August 1914, and ultimately involved most of the world. The MS. had been sent to Messrs. E. J. Brill, of Leyden (Holland), the firm that had printed so many of his books, and of whom he always spoke highly ; and the whole of the proofs had reached him. Further than that nothing could be done, and the proofs are now in the care of his executors.

If the declaration of war gave a shock to Payne, on the other hand he rejoiced to see that his country—the country whose weaknesses and dangerous tendencies he had so often lamented in plaintive or bitter song—retained its ancient virility. He held that Germany was principally moved by the evil example of Frederick the Great, or, as he preferred to call him, “ Frederick the Great Thief.”

In October, in order to be nearer to Mrs. Pritchard, he moved from Mortimer Crescent to 28 The Boltons, South Kensington, and while there he occupied himself in translating the Arabic romance already several times referred to, *The Marvellous History of Seif ben Dhi Yezn, King of Yemen*. He was able to finish it, but it was unpublished at the time of his death. The garden was overgrown with Giant Wild Hemlock, but he would not have it touched. He loved, he said, its purple spotted stems and great umbels.

In January he was interested in the approaching marriage of Mr. Sidney Nix with Miss Boone, who, he says in a letter to Mrs. Nix dated the 22nd of that month, “ I am sure will make him an excellent wife.”

In March he complained that his eyes were weaker, and saw a specialist, who merely recommended stronger glasses. In June he went with Mrs. Pritchard and Miss Brereton to Bræmar, but was obliged to return hastily to London in order to consult the specialist again ; and then it transpired that his eyes were in a serious condition. Gradually he became quite blind.

Miss Brereton tended him with the most watchful care, anticipating his wants and endeavouring to gratify his sudden wishes. He liked to talk of his early struggles, and sometimes, when the old Adam came over him, he

would make, as in former days, a tremendous lunge at some unfortunate musical composer or critic, which would be followed by the old-time ripple of laughter.

The next step was to arrange for some one to read to him, for he had, of course, become totally dependent on others. But he was very particular as to the qualifications of a reader. When Miss Brereton said, "Shall we try to get Mr. Wright to come up?" he replied, "No; the reading would try his eyes too much; besides, Olney is too far away, and he could not stay long."

Miss B. How about Mrs. So-and-so?

P. No; she has lost a front tooth.

Miss B. Mr. Dash?

P. No; he has a white voice [meaning that it was monotonous and spiritless].

Eventually it was decided to enlist the services of Mr. Forman, and he and Miss Brereton divided the labour, and at the same time received lessons in delivery. Often they read to him his own poems and portions of his translation of Omar Kheyyam. Once he rang Miss Brereton up in the middle of the night, and asked her to read to him the Smetana sonnet.¹

"Of his own poems," says Miss Brereton, "the one he liked best to hear was 'A Grave at Montmartre,' and he took a great deal of trouble in teaching Mr. Forman and me to read it with proper emphasis. Of the quatrains in the Rubaiyat that were read to him, the one that most affected him was the bitter No. 377, in which Omar Kheyyam, at the approach of death, laments the stiff-neckedness and folly of the public which prevented him from giving to the world many high thoughts and jewels of meaning and exposition with which his soul was pregnant—the quatrain that ends

A thousand fine conceits and thoughts an hundred thousand
For the witlessness of the folk, each unexpressed abideth."

Payne's experience was precisely Omar Kheyyam's over again. Once more, how the world does waste its

¹ See p. 134.

great men! Instead of trying to help Payne, almost everybody in the literary world seemed to want to hinder him—to prevent his poetry and his wisdom from getting to the knowledge of the public. His “*Re Infecta*” (*Vigil and Vision*, p. 115) is on this same theme.

Mr. Harry Payne read fiction to him; but never the poems, because it was held that he “could not do justice to them.”

“I wonder, Mr. Payne, you never married,” Miss Brereton once said to her patient.

“When I was young,” he explained, “I was too poor, and now I am better off I am too particular.”

On 18 November died at Colon, Panama, at the advanced age of eighty-one, his old friend Traey Robinson.

Mrs. Vinter (Miss Daisy Hutt), Mrs. Nix, and Mr. and Mrs. Romeu (Miss Ida Nix) often visited him during his last illness.

The following letter, written to Mrs. Romeu, is of pathetic interest, considering the sadness of his state; for it contains, as will be seen, a reference to the old pleasant times when he and his friends of the “House of the Four Winds” worshipped at the shrines of Saints Oyster and Lobster:

“28 THE BOLTONS,
SOUTH KENSINGTON.
“December 25th, 1915.

“MY DEAR IDA,—

“Many thanks for your kind letter and remembrance. I am still in a very suffering state and am quite blind, though the doctors give some hopes of recovery, but as soon as I am able to receive visitors you can be assured you will be among the first to be asked. Please give my best regards to your husband and brother, and the rest of the family. Tell them how much I should like to be able to be with them on Bank Holiday as usual.

“Yours affectionately,
“JOHN PAYNE.”

“He was a brave man,” said Miss Brereton, “all through his painful illness, and was the same great and

good man to the last hour." No one, indeed, could fail to recognize the uprightness of all his motives. "He was quite happy," she continues, "in spite of his blindness, and he was always looking forward to giving to the world some more of his poems." Yet his last four months were a living death.

Mrs. Pritchard was much with him. My eye trouble having returned, I was prevented from visiting him, and my correspondence got sadly in arrears. Mrs. Pritchard told me afterwards—and I was much touched to hear it—that he often spoke of me, expressing appreciation of my efforts to bring popularity to his poetry, and stated that he should ever value my "kindness and friendship." Though himself quite blind, he thought about my own difficulty, and several times he said to Mrs. Pritchard, "I wonder how Wright is—good chap! I have heard nothing of him for so long."¹

On 10 February I sent him a four-page letter, in which I gave news of my family, and inquired respecting his health. But the sombre fairy tale of his life² was nearly at an end; the beautiful ghittern, as Omar Kheyyam³ would have said, was about to be untuned. He had all but reached the Last Inn, to use an expression then frequently on his lips, and it will be remembered that there is in *The Way of the Winepress* a sonnet with that title. One day, when he realized that the end could not be far off, he said to Mrs. Pritchard: "The wonder sometimes comes over me whether after all I may not have been mistaken in respect to the value of my poetry."

She assured him that its merits would ultimately be recognized.

A curious little incident connected with these last days recalls the Stilton cheese story related on an early page. Payne had a craving for an unsweetened cake, and nobody seemed to know how to make one. One day Harry said: "Flo" [meaning his wife] "will help you," and a day or two afterwards he brought a Simnel

¹ Letter of Mrs. Pritchard to me, 28 February, 1916.

² See *Vigil and Vision*, p. 109.

³ See Payne's translation, p. 309.

cake of her making. Payne pronounced it perfect, and he equally enjoyed two others that followed. When, however, he tasted the fourth he shook his head and said : " It's not so good as the others, there is too much sugar in it." As a matter of fact the ingredients were precisely the same as those of the former cakes, but he was not to be convinced.

On the morning of 11 February, which proved to be the last day of his life, he seemed very much better, and in the afternoon Miss Brereton read to him several of his original poems. At half-past four Mr. Forman called. " Good afternoon," said Payne, " we won't have any reading to-day." In the evening he expressed the wish for some new sheets and pillow-cases, and with his usual impatience he sent her out to buy them. " He was very keen," Mrs. Pritchard told me, " about these purchases."

On Miss Brereton's return he said eagerly: " Have you got the sheets ? "

" Don't talk," she said, and gave him some lemonade.

" Did you get the pillow-cases ? "

" Don't talk."

A few minutes later his face changed, and he was gone.

He had died young, at the age of seventy-three. His was the eternal youth of the poet. The third member of the Triumvirate had fallen.

A reply to my last communication to him came from his brother Harry, with whom I had often been in correspondence. It was dated 12 February, 1916, and commenced : " In answer to your kind letter to my brother John, I regret to tell you that he died last night." I was informed that the remains were, according to Payne's express wish, to be cremated at Golder's Green—he said he wanted " to return to nature as soon as possible "—and I was invited to be present—but circumstances prevented me from leaving home. The date chosen was 14 February, and the ashes were scattered over the grounds of the crematorium by his nephew, his brother Harry, Mr. Alfred Forman and Miss Brereton.

He has entered into the substance of the flowers.

Their perfume is the perfume of his verses. He is part of the rose-campions, the zinnias, and the lilies that he loved and sang. The lily is his marble monument, its yellow stamens are the epitaph. He had himself selected the words which would best commemorate him, and in the bell of the lily, for those who can read, are the words *Linguam Anglicam Amavit*.

Poet, take your well-earned rest! The victory which, to our disappointment failed to arrive in your lifetime, but which you so often prophesied would ultimately be attained, is at last in sight!

Among the little treasures found after his death among his belongings were a portrait of "Helen" and a lock of that golden hair which he had so often sung.

The obituaries of the greatest man of letters of the century will be looked back upon as among the curiosities of literature. When Tennyson died (and the amount of him that is imperishable is quite trivial) there were notices by the acre—many of them illustrated. One would have thought the crack of doom had come. Even for so minute a poetaster as Sir Lewis Morris there was no stint of journalistic crape. When Payne died *The Times* gave him exactly four and a half inches of feeble comment, and even for that his patient ghost had to wait thirteen days, for the notice did not appear till 24 February. Other leading papers wasted even less upon him. Most of them, even to this very day, are in blissful ignorance that the greatest writer of recent years has passed away.

By far the best and most sympathetic of the notices was that in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, 15 February, 1916. An article in the *Sphere* (accompanied by a portrait), 11 March, was headed "The Best Translator of the *Decameron*." The writer, Mr. Clement Shorter, who was subsequently able to throw valuable light on the early period of Payne's career, spoke of the deceased as "a man of great distinction," and probably the only poet in whose lifetime and in whose honour a Society was instituted, adding "what Dr. Furnivall did for Browning Mr. Wright, of Olney, did for Payne." Mr. Shorter also

spoke of the pleasure given him by Payne's translations of the *Arabian Nights* and *Bandello*. In short, apart from the notices in the *Birmingham Daily Post* and the *Sphere* the fact of the death of Payne was practically ignored by the Press. Under this head I could say many bitter words, but I prefer to suppress them. I prefer to say to the English Press: Let bygones be bygones. If you had any animus against Payne, forget it. Do this great man justice now. It is not too late. You will honour yourselves by honouring him.

As soon as possible I called on Mrs. Pritchard at Cleve Lodge, and on that occasion, and on later occasions when I saw her, she gave me a number of the particulars recorded in these pages. In a letter to her, written in February 1916, I had expressed the hope that Burton's letters to Payne would be carefully preserved, as they substantiated all the principal statements made in my *Life of Sir Richard Burton* respecting the rival translations. She replied on 28 February, and said that she had given orders that all the Burton letters should be tied together and sent to her.

I had also said: "As the work in *Humoristica* (Series 1st and 2nd) is for the most part unworthy of Payne's pen, do you not think it would be well to have the copies destroyed?" She replied: "I don't see eye to eye with you on the subject of the *Humoristicas*. They were, of course, mere trivialities compared to his serious work, but they expressed a humour peculiar to him, and for that I value them." I think now that Mrs. Pritchard was right, and I was wrong, for I feel sure the world will, out of gratitude for all that Payne has done for it, be lenient towards these foibles. In any case my suggestion came too late, for a number of copies (sent out by Payne himself) were in the hands of his admirers. My position is that although Payne had a humour of a pawky and always delightful trend, which constantly revealed itself in conversation (though it is difficult to reproduce it—the amusement being derived rather from how he said a thing rather than from what he said), yet immediately he put pen to paper that humour for the most part evapo-

rated. I should, of course, be glad to be assured that I am wrong.

In reply to a request from Mrs. Pritchard I then lent her Payne's *Autobiography*, which she kindly enriched with a number of notes supplied in the letter¹ that accompanied its return. The last letter which I received from her was written on 30 January, 1917. On 3 February I spent a very pleasant afternoon with her, and we never afterwards met. She—the truest of true sisters—died on 1 April of that year.

Mr. Harry Payne died on 12 November, 1916, and Miss Nora Payne on 16 September, 1917. Only one member of the family therefore now remains—Mrs. Byam.

The proofs of *The Way of the Winepress* and the manuscript of the translation of *The Marvellous History of Seif ben Dhi Yezn, King of Yemen* are in the possession of Payne's executors.

Such was the career of John Payne, who, take him as original poet and translator, was undoubtedly the greatest English man of letters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When his original work receives the careful study which of a certainty it must receive, he will be found to have been equalled by no poet of his time, with the exception of Swinburne. As a translator he reigns supreme. In the particular department of prose work, which he made specially his own, no other writer in any age or country can be named in the same breath with him. He has given to Kilburn (and who before ever heard of Kilburn!) a literary prominence of the kind that belongs to a Shiraz, an Avignon, a Weimar.

Every lover of England should be proud that so great a writer was also an Englishman.

¹ *Letters of Mrs. Pritchard to T.W.*, No. 11.

THE END.

APPENDIX I

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF JOHN PAYNE

A. PRINCIPAL WORKS

In December 1871 Payne was residing at 37 Upper Marylebone Street (see page 15).

	Published.	Later Editions.
1. The Masque of Shadows and other Poems ..	1870	1884
2. Intaglios	1871	
3. Songs of Life and Death	1872	1884

In April 1876 Payne was residing at 20 North Row, Park Lane (see page 54).

4. The Poems of François Villon	1878	1881-92
5. Lautree	1878	
6. New Poems	1880	1884
7. The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night (nine volumes)	1882-4	

In March 1884 Payne was residing at 5 Lansdowne Place, Brunswick Square (see page 80).

8. Tales from the Arabic (three volumes) ..	1884	
9. Alaeddin and Zein ul Asnam	1885	
10. The Decameron of Boccaccio (three volumes) ..	1886	1893

In 1886 or 1887 he removed to 10 Oxford Road, Kilburn (see page 99).

11. The Novels of Matteo Bandello (six volumes) ..	1890	
12. The Quatrains of Omar Kheyyam	1898	
13. The Poems of Hafiz (three volumes)	1901	
14. Collected Poems (two volumes)	1902	

- | | | |
|---|---------|-----------|
| 15. The Descent of the Dove (only 25 copies printed) | 1902 | |
| (It is included in No. 17, Songs of Consolation) | | |
| 16. Vigil and Vision, with Supplement of which
only 10 copies were printed (October) | .. | 1903 |
| 17. Songs of Consolation | | 1904 |
| 18. Hamid the Luekless and other Tales in verse | | 1904 |
| 19. Flowers of Francee, Romantic Period (two vols.) | | 1906 |
| 20. Flowers of Francee, The Renaissance | | 1907 |
| 21. Carol and Cadenece | | 1908 |
| 22. Ibn et Tefrid | | 1908 1909 |
| 23. Flower o' the Thorn | | 1908 |

In January 1910 he removed to Kingswood, Mortimer
Creseent (12 Mortimer Road, Maida Vale). (See page 230.)

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 24. The Poems of Heinrich Heine (three volumes) | 1911 |
| 25. Flowers of France, The Latter Days (two vols.) | 1913 |
| 26. The Way of the Winepress (unpublished) | .. |
| 27. The Marvellous History of Seif ben Dhi Yezn,
King of Yemen (unpublished) | |

In 1914 he removed to The Boltons, South Kensington
(see page 262).

B. SELECTIONS, PRIVATELY PRINTED WORKS AND NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES

St. Paul's Magazine.

- A City Apologue, December 1867 (*Collected Poems*, ii. 3).
Columbus, May 1868 (not republished).
The Red Rose, October 1868 (*Collected Poems*, ii. 38).
Quia Multum Amavit, December 1868 (*Collected Poems*, ii. 17).
The Search after the Fountain of Jouvence,¹ March-June 1869
(*Collected Poems*, i. 215).

Temple Bar.

- A Dream Life, March 1868 (*Collected Poems*, ii. 35).

St. James's Magazine.

- Vol. 40, pp. 98-103. Review of Professor Blackie's "Faust."

¹ Appears in *Collected Poems* as "The Fountain of Youth."

Le Tombeau de Théophile Gautier.

Poems by Swinburne, Payne and others, 1873. Payne's contribution consisted of three poems:

Théophile Gautier (a), *Collected Poems*, p. 211.

Théophile Gautier (b), *Collected Poems*, p. 213.

A Funeral Song for Théophile Gautier, *Collected Poems*, p. 293.

New Quarterly Review.

Specimens of Proposed Translation of *The Arabian Nights*, January–April 1879.

Nineteenth Century.

September 1880; Article on Villon, pp. 481–500.

Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night : its History and Character.

Twenty copies reprinted for the author, 1884.

Sir Winfrith and other Poems.

Published by the John Payne Society, 1905.

Selections from the Poetry of John Payne.

Made by Tracy and Lucy Robinson, New York, 1906.

Abou Mohammed.

Published by the John Payne Society, 1906.

Newton-Cowper Centenary Verses by Payne.

Published by the Cowper Society, 1907.

Humoristica, 1st Series, 24 pages, 1909.*Humoristica*, 2nd Series, 48 pages, 1909.

APPENDIX II

NUMBER OF COPIES OF HIS WORKS PRINTED

	Ordinary Copies.	Large Paper.	Price of Ordinary.	Price of Large Paper.
4. Villon	157	?	1 1 0	—
7. Nights (9 vols.) ..	500	?	9 9 0	—
8. Tales from Arabic (3vols.)	700	50	3 3 0	—
9. Alaeddin	700	50	1 1 0	2 2 0
10. Decameron	700	50	3 3 0	—
11. Bandello (6 vols.) ..	700	50	7 7 0	14 0 0
Villon 3rd ed. ..	700	50	1 1 0	2 2 0
12. Omar Kheyyam ..	675	75	1 1 0	2 2 0
13. Hafiz (3 vols.) ..	675	75	3 3 0	6 6 0
14. Collected Wks. (2 vols.)	250	50	2 2 0	4 4 0
16. Vigil and Vision ..	300	50	0 6 0	1 1 0
19. Flowers of France, Romantic Period (2 vols.)	675	75	2 2 0	4 4 0
20. Flowers of France, Renaissance	675	75	1 1 0	2 2 0
21. Carol and Cadence ..	275	25	1 1 0	2 2 0
23. Flower o' the Thorn ..	250	50	0 7 6	1 1 0
24. Heine (3 vols.) ..	675	75	3 3 0	6 6 0
25. Flowers of France, Lat- ter days (2 vols.) ..	675	75	2 2 0	4 4 0

APPENDIX III

THE JOHN PAYNE SOCIETY

President : The Hon. Sir JOHN A. COCKBURN.

The John Payne Society, which was founded on 2 May, 1905, has for its object the popularization of John Payne's works. It issues daintily bound selections from them at 2s. 6d. per volume. The membership fee is 5s. per annum, members receive copies of the Society's publications gratis, and the meetings generally take place in London. The first president was Sir Edward Charles Ross, and the first general meeting of the Society was held at Margery Hall, Forest Gate, on 12 August, 1905. At these meetings papers are read and recitations are given.

The first volume issued by the Society was *Sir Winfrith*, a volume containing Payne's principal ballads. Among the more important papers read at different times were those by Mr. W. F. Kirby, Dr. O. Smithson, Mr. John Casey and Mr. Edward Beesly. Mr. Tracy Robinson, one of the members, issued in 1906 a handsome volume entitled *Selections from the Poetry of John Payne*. Mr. Thomas Wright, the Secretary, has contributed to the Press the following articles: "Hafiz and John Payne" (*T.P.'s Weekly*, 7 September and 14 September, 1906); "A Great Anthology—Mr. Payne's Flowers of France" (*Id.* 8 March, 1907); "John Payne and his Work, an Intimate Appreciation" (*The Academy*, 14 September, 1912); "Talks with John Payne" (*Common Sense*, 20 October, 1917). The following important articles appeared in the *Birmingham Daily Post*: "Mr. John Payne's New Poems," 6 March, 1908, and "John Payne, Poet and Translator" (15 February, 1916).

At the 13th Annual Meeting of the Society, held at Olney, 27 November, 1917, an address was given by Mr. Wright on "John Payne as I knew him." Payne's song, "The Air is White," was sung by Mrs. E. Sowman, and Miss H. Gibson recited "The Ballad of Past Delight." The 14th Annual Meeting took place at 49 Nevcrn Square, London, on Saturday, 27 April, 1918, when Mr. A. W. Oke, LL.M., took the chair, and addresses were given by Mr. Thomas Wright, Mr. John Kettelwell and others. On the

following Thursday Mr. Wright delivered a lecture on John Payne before members and students of Bristol University.

The 15th Annual Meeting took place, by invitation of Dr. T. G. Pinehes, on Saturday, 27 April, 1919, at 10 Oxford Road, Kilburn, the house in which Payne wrote the finest of his poems, and made several of his translations. The Hon. Sir John Cockburn was in the chair, an address was given by Mr. Wright, and some of Payne's poems were read by Mr. Ashton Burall.

Any person can join the Society. For particulars application should be made to the Secretary, Cowper School, Olney, Bucks.

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